United Nations CEDAW/C/BGD/5

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Distr.: General
3 January 2003

Original: English

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Fifth periodic report of States parties

Bangladesh*

* The present report is being issued as received, without formal editing. For the initial report submitted by the Government of Bangladesh, see CEDAW/C/5/34; for its consideration by the Committee, see CEDAW/C/SR.96, 97 and 99, and *Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-second Session, Supplement No. 38* (A/42/38), paras. 503-572; for the second periodic report submitted by the Government of Bangladesh, see CEDAW/C/13/Add.30; for its consideration by the Committee, see CEDAW/C/SR.220 and 227, and *Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 38* (A/48/38), paras. 248-326; for the combined third and fourth periodic reports submitted by the Government of Bangladesh, see CEDAW/C/BGD/3-4; for its consideration by the Committee, see CEDAW/C/SR.357 and 358, and *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 38* (A/52/38/Rev.1), paras. 422-464.

02-76190 (E) 250203

Table of Contents

Introduction **3**

I. BACKGROUND FRAMEWORK **4**

1.1 The Country Profile 4
1.2 Status of Women in Bangladesh: 5
1.3 Women in Development Plans: 7
1.4 National Policies and National Action Plan: 8
1.5 General Legal Framework: 8
1.6 National Machineries: 8
1.7 Remaining Obstacles Encountered by Women 8

II. PROGRESS REPORT ON ARTICLES TWO TO SIXTEEN OF THE CONVENTION **9**

2.2 Article 2: Obligations to Eliminate Discrimination 9

2.3 Article 3: The Development and Advancement of Women **10**

2.4 Article 4: Temporary Special Measures for Institutionalizing Equality between Women And Men 12
2.5 Article 5: Sex Roles and Stereotyping 15
2.6 Article 6: *Suppression of Exploitation of Women* 18
2.7 Article- 7: Elimination of Discrimination against Women in Political and Public Life: 22
2.8 Article 8: Equal Opportunity for International Representation and Participation 26
2.9 Article 9: Equal Rights with Regard to Nationality 26
2.10 Article 10: Equal Rights in the Field of Education 26
2.11 Article 11: Equal Employment and Training Opportunities. 29
2.12 Article 12: Equality of Access to Health Care 30
2.13 Article 13: Equal Rights with Regard to Economic and Social Benefits 32
2.14 Article 14: Particular problems faced by Rural Women 36
2.15 Article 15: Equality before the Law and in Civil Matters 40
2.16 Article 16: Equality in Marriage and Family Law 40

Part III. Measures taken by the Government to implement the Beijing Platform for Actions in the critical areas of concern **43**

3.1 Women and Poverty 43
3.2 Women and Decision-Making 44
3.3 Education and Training of Women 45
3.4 Women and Health 45
3.5 Violence against Women 46
3.7 Women and Economy 46
3.8 Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women 47
3.10 Women and Media 49
3.11 Women and the Environment 49
3.12 The Girl Child 50

Part IV. Concluding Observations and comments: Response to the Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: Bangladesh (12/08/97) **51**

Part V. References **57**

Introduction

1. This report covers the period from 1997-2002. This report provides information with an analysis on implementation status of various articles of the CEDAW. The report consists of three main parts.

2. The First Part provides information on current socio-economic status of women in Bangladesh with background information on overall socio–economic and political situation prevailing in the country.

3. The Second Part provides specific information relating to Articles 2 to Article 16 of the Convention emphasizing on policies, programs and recent legal measures. This part provides information with an analysis on measures undertaken to promote an elimination of discrimination against women as well as remove remaining obstacles to ensure equality between women and men in all spheres of life.

4. The Third Part of the report provides information on measures taken to implement the twelve critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action highlighting steps taken in the process of Beijing Plus five and post Beijing Plus Five.

5. The fourth part includes concluding observations and comments made by the CEDAW committee as on 12 – 08 – 97.

PART I

I. BACKGROUND FRAMEWORK

1.1 The Country Profile

Area, Geography and Population

Bangladesh is situated in the northern tropical zone between 23-27 degrees north latitude and 88-92 degrees east longitude having a territory of about 147,570 square kilometers.

With a population of 123.15 million (2001), Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries of the world. Its population density is 834 per square kilometer. The Infant Mortality Rate (per thousand live births) has declined from 92 in 1991 to 62 in 2000. According to Household Expenditure Survey (HES) 2000 population percentage for under age 5 years has come down to 11.58 percent (11.92 percent male and 11.77 percent female) from about 16 percent (16.15 percent male and 16.78 percent female) as reported in Population Census 1991.

Population percentage for under age 15 has also reduced to 39.63 percent from 45.15 percent during the same period. The population over 65 years of age has increased to 4.07 percent from 3.23 percent (3.62 percent males and 2.81 percent females). As a result, the country's dependency ratio of population, measured in terms of ratio between population 0-14 and 65 years over to population 15-65 has also declined from 93.7 percent to 77.6 percent reducing pressure on mother and child health care, and on pre-school care.

Life expectancy at birth has increased from 56 years during 1990-1995 to 58 years during 1995-2000 both for males and for females. About 49.5 percent of the total population is women. According to Population Census 2001, the sex ratio (men per 100 women) is 103.8 compared to 106 of the Population Census 1991. The above data indicate that there has been a slight improvement in gender index of population of Bangladesh during nineties.

The growth rate of labour force is 2.5 percent per annum. While labour force participation rate in general has increased from 52% in 1995/96, to 54.9% in 1999-2000, female labour force has increased in a more accelerated rate from 15.8% to 23.9% during the same period.

Economic Progress:

The contribution of agriculture and manufacturing sectors to the Gross Domestic Product was 25.33 percent and 15.84 percent respectively in FY2001. Manufacturing, service units of the modern and organized sectors are to be found mostly in the urban areas. There has been some reform in recent years such as reduction of control over investment pursuing policies of denationalization and privatization of public enterprises.

Liberalization of trade and tariff and creation of congenial environment for private investment have contributed towards economic transition. These resulted in the growth of some export oriented manufacturing industries such as readymade garments and shrimp. The majority of approximately 2 million workforce of garment sector is female (almost 90%). The sector is now facing serious setback created by economic slowdown in major developed countries and unfavorable condition created by quota withdrawal after 2004.

In FY1999, the per capita gross national product (GNP) was US$ 370, the annual average inflation rate 8.9 and total external debt US$ 16,957 million . Due to disproportionately large volume of imports, coupled with smaller volume of exports, Bangladesh is experiencing a persistent negative balance of payments over a considerable period. However, increased remittance earning by expatriate Bangladeshi workers in recent months has contributed to improving current account balance of the country. This, coupled with domestic resource mobilization, has enabled the government to finance over one third of the development budget from its own resources during 1990s.

Studies have shown that landlessness is increasing every year, resulting in massive unemployment. Rural to urban migration in search of jobs has become a common trend, creating social and economic imbalances especially in fast growing cities without any matching infrastructure development.

There are indications by labour force surveys and also micro studies that the growth of rural non-farm sector has accelerated in recent years and has absorbed a part of the growing landless labour force and helped in the reduction of poverty.

General Political Structure:

Bangladesh has a parliamentary form of Government headed by a Prime Minister since 1991. Elected representatives are responsible for two main areas of state intervention: policy making at the national level and local level development. Policymaking and legislation are functions of the Parliament while local level development is carried out through local autonomous bodies. The lowest unit of local government is the Union Parishad run by people's representatives. The country is administratively divided into 6 divisions consisting of 64 districts. The districts are also divided into several upazillas (sub-districts) with 467 Upazila in all. Districts are the main administrative units. The civil servants carry out the executive responsibilities of these administrative units.

1.2 Status of Women in Bangladesh:

Socio-Cultural:

Bangladesh is one of the seven countries in the world where the number of men exceeds the number of women. This is perhaps due to prolonged discriminations against women in terms of nutrition, food intake and other amenities of life. Traditional socio-cultural values and practices work against raising

the status of women. Women still have limited opportunities for education, technical and vocational training, employment and activities.

Socio-economic changes, triggered by increasing rates of landlessness and impoverishment, have had a profound impact on women's lives. While poverty affects the household as a whole, women bear a disproportionately greater burden in managing household production and consumption under conditions of severe scarcity. Nearly 76 percent of women fell under the category "poor" in terms of income and resource endowments. Women are routinely discriminated within the household in allocation of resources in terms of food, education, health care, shelter and workload.

Though women play the central role in the functioning of the household, their contributions outside the domestic sphere remains low. Although male headed households are the norm, national statistics show that women head about 8 percent of households. The percentage of de-jure and de-facto female-headed household is increasing, particularly among the poorest section of the rural population due to male migration, desertion and divorce etc. The income distribution is more skewed among women headed households.

Education

The overall literacy rate of the population (7 years and above) in 2000 was 44.9 percent. The rate was 49.5 for male compared to 40.1 for female. Male children are still sent to school more frequently than female children are and parents are more likely to spend on books and education than for boys that of girls, who are expected to look after their parents in old age.

Measures taken by the government are detailed in Part III.

Health:

In Bangladesh, health care receives inadequate resource allocations. At the household level, poverty results in limited expenditure on health-care and consequently women are more disadvantaged than men in terms of access to health care and the quality of nutrition are. The household allocation for medical care for women is much lower than that of men (Tk. 18.8 and 24 respectively for women and men in rural areas). The government has taken some noteworthy measures in improving health of women of different age group.

Specific measures are mentioned in relevant parts of Part II and Part III.

Employment:

The employment status of women in Bangladesh is lower compared to men. Nearly 43 percent women are involved in agricultural activities but 70 percent of them work as unpaid family labour. The 1991 census indicated that 11 percent of all women were economically active. Labour force participation rates for females stood at 9.9 and 14.1 percent in the Labour Force Surveys (LFS) of 1985 and 1991 respectively. The use of an extended definition of labour force

activities, which included a number of expenditure saving activities carried out by women resulted in their increased participation rate which is 55.9% in 1999-2000.

Women work harder and for longer hours than men. Women's working time range from 16 to 18 hours including child rearing and household management as indicated in various household surveys. Women's participation in formal sector employment was negligible until the recent past.

In the industrial sector, women's participation is widely visible in the construction industry, electronics, garments and shrimp processing. Local textiles, shoes, cosmetics and such other consumable production units have also employed women. The garment-manufacturing sub-sector, which is the largest export earning sector, is the largest employer of women. More than 2 million women work in about 3500 garment units and they constitute over 90 percent of the total labour force in this sector.

Women's economic participation is greater in the non-formal sector and has increased substantially due to the success of self-employment generating micro-credit programs run by both the government institutions and NGOs. During the last decade women's participation in the banking sector, various offices, NGOs and business concern have also increased substantially.

1.3 Women in Development Plans:

Women are considered as a distinct target group by the national development plans. The recent five-year plans have emphasized empowering women. The Fourth five-year Plan (FFYP 1990-95) strategies included integration of sector based planning with group based planning and mainstreaming of women to reduce gender disparities. Development policies concerning women were placed within the context of a macro economic framework with a multi-sectoral thrust. The plan emphasized the development of poor and disadvantaged women.

The Fifth five-year Plan aims at achieving the goal of equality between men and women. It has major thrust on integration of WID concerns and gender issues in the mainstream of development as supportive of the macro objectives of poverty reduction, human resource development, closing the gender gap and establishment of social justice. Though operationalising gender mainstreaming strategy lacks effective mechanism and mobilization of resources, still it is a significant step forward towards achieving gender equality in development.

Very recently, the Government has initiated poverty reduction strategy policy in the planning and resource allocation process, where women at the grassroots level will be largely benefited. In the present fiscal year the Government has allocated 43 percent of its total development expenditure for poverty reduction strategy policy.

1.4 National Policies and National Action Plan:

National Policy for Advancement of Women (NP) was adopted in 1997. It clearly spells out the commitments and policies for women on Human Rights, Education and Training, Health and Nutrition, Political Empowerment, Administrative Reform, Violence and Oppression against Women. The government approved the National Action Plan (NAP) in 1998, which was formulated in the light of Beijing Platform for Action (PFA). Along with the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, fifteen other sectoral ministries were also included in the NAP for implementing women's development programs across the government. Bangladesh attended the Special UN General Assembly meeting on Beijing plus Five held in New York during 5-9 June 2000 and contributed in the progress review process of the NAP.

1.5 General Legal Framework:

The Parliament and the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs are responsible for enacting legal provisions and upholding human rights. The Judiciary is responsible for interpretation of laws and judgments and the law enforcing agencies such as the police are responsible for enforcing the provisions. Individuals can seek redress from the judiciary within the context of existing laws, if their rights are violated. Special tribunals and courts such as labour courts, administrative tribunals, the Central Cell for the Prevention of Oppression against Women and Children, respond to specific appeals within their jurisdiction.

In the past, various laws have been formulated or amended to ensure equality and protect women's rights. These include: (a) The Muslim Family Laws Ordinance of 1961; (b) The Dowry Prohibition Act of 1980 and its amendment in 1986; (c) The Family Court Ordinance of 1985; (d) The Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929; (e) The Muslim Marriage and Divorce Registration Act of 1974.

Detailed information is in Part II.

1.6 National Machineries:

The National Machinery for Women's advancement include Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and its implementing agencies, National Council for Women Development, Women Development Implementation and Evaluation Committee, Upazila and District WID Coordination Committee.

Detailed information on these institutions is in PART II.

1.7 Remaining Obstacles Encountered by Women

An inter-ministerial committee for implementation of CEDAW led by MWCA reviewed the reservations clauses in CEDAW and recommended withdrawal of reservations from 13 (a) and 16.1 (f) in 1997. However, reservations on Article 2 and 16.1 (c) are still there.

There are problems in implementing existing legal provisions due to women's, as well as men's ignorance about their legal rights. The content as well as application of laws put women in a disadvantaged position as compared to men.

PART II

II. PROGRESS REPORT ON ARTICLES TWO TO SIXTEEN OF THE CONVENTION

2.2 Article 2: Obligations to Eliminate Discrimination

State parties condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, agree to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women and, to this end, undertake:

(a) To embody the principle of the equality of men and women in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation if not yet incorporated therein and to ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realization of this principle;

(b) To adopt progressive legislative and other measures, including sanctions where appropriate, prohibiting discrimination against women;

(c) To establish legal protection of the rights of women on an equal basis with men and to ensure through competent national tribunals and other public institutions the effective protection of women against any act of discrimination;

(d) To refrain from engaging in any act or practice of discrimination against women and to ensure that public authorities and institutions shall act in conformity with obligation;

(e) To take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organization or enterprise;

(f) To take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women;

(g) To repeal all national penal provisions which constitute discrimination against women.

Government Initiatives:

The Government of Bangladesh is assessing whether its reservation on the Article No. 2 is in direct contradiction to the Religious Personal Law. Bangladesh is largely governed by the Civil and Criminal procedure codes enacted during the British rule. In case of marriage, divorce, custody alimony and property inheritance interpretations of Personal law followed. Followers of different faiths come under somewhat different provisions of laws and as a result discriminatory situations arise in areas of marriage, divorce, alimony, custody and guardianship. However, to mitigate the problem of heterogeneity, in 1996, the Government set up a high powered inter-ministerial committee under the Ministry of Women and Children affairs to review the overall situation and recommend changes. Considering recommendations of this committee the government has already withdrawn its reservation from one of the articles and subarticles of the CEDAW. Currently withdrawing reservation from or approving the Article 16.1(c) and Article 2 is under active review of the government.

Major Advantage of Implementation:

The Constitution guarantees equal rights of women and men in every sphere of life. The Government is gradually taking steps to ensure the Constitutional rights.

NGO and Civil Society Initiatives:

NGOs have initiated lobbying efforts and advocacy attempts to remove reservations from the Articles 2 and 16.1 (C). They are continually voicing their views in favor of a Uniform Family Code for all citizens of the country, as this is the only way to guarantee equal rights to all citizens.

About withdrawing reservation on Article 2, the present government is taking active interest to come to a decision. In this regard, to avoid future legal complication, the MWCA has requested the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs to examine the ways and means to withdraw reservation on Article 2.

2.3 Article 3: The Development and Advancement of Women

State parties shall take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedom on a basis of equality with men.

According to the Constitution, women enjoy the same status and rights as men in terms of education, health, political process, employment, development processes and social welfare. However, in practice, they do not enjoy the fundamental rights and freedom to the extent as men do. The unequal status of women in society and in public life is largely due to the fact of having unequal status in the family life. Women's lower socio-economic status, lower literacy,

lesser mobility are some of the practical obstacles to the establishment of their fundamental rights.

However, many steps are taken to change the traditional attitude and practice in the society and civil life and the result is discernable. Some of the more important measures are described below:

For initiating political empowerment of women, the Government has passed *Local Government Election Bill 1997* to ensure grassroots level women's political participation. As a result 14228 women were directly elected as members of union councils. Currently women activists and women organizations are lobbying with the government for direct election of women to the National Parliament.

To guide, initiate and promote overall development activities for women the National Council for Women's Development (NCWD) approved *National Policy for Women's Advancement in 1997*. The major goals of the policy are as follows:

1. Establish equality between men and women in all spheres;
2. Eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls;
3. Establish women's human rights;
4. Develop women as human resource;
5. Recognize women's contribution in social and economic spheres;
6. Eliminate poverty among women;
7. Establish equality between men and women in administration, politics, education, games, sports and all other socio-economic spheres;
8. Eliminate all forms of oppression against women and girls;
9. Ensure empowerment of women in the fields of politics, administration and the economy;
10. Develop appropriate technology for women;
11. Ensure adequate health and nutrition for women;
12. Provide housing and shelter to women;
13. Create positive images of women in the media;
14. Take special measures for women in especially disadvantaged situations.

To monitor the implementation of various policy, programs and laws, the NCWD and Inter-ministerial coordination and evaluation committee provide institutional mechanism through which celebrities and leader in women's movement and representatives of various women's organizations are able to contribute.

Major Obstacles towards Implementation:

The personal laws that govern family life are a major impediment for women in exercising their fundamental human rights regarding marriage, divorce, custody of children, alimony and property inheritance. Tackling increasing violence, rape and oppression of women especially through acid throwing has become a challenging issue for the society to deal with.

Although there are some laudable initiatives, the implementation of laws regarding oppression against women still remains weak.

NGO Initiatives:

NGOs in Bangladesh are active in raising awareness against oppressions of women. They hold rallies, organize seminars, dialogue, workshops and meetings at various levels. They also actively publicize relevant issues through the media. They are using mass media like radio and TV through dramas, documentaries and other means to raise awareness. They have formed networks and several fora on women's human rights. They also provide poor women with legal aids to fight against violation of human rights. A major contribution of NGO's is in lobbying/advocating for human rights and taking stern measures against oppressors.

2.4 Article 4: Temporary Special Measures for Institutionalizing Equality between Women and Men

1. *Adoption by the State Parties of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination as defined in the present Convention, but shall in no way entail as a consequence the maintenance of unequal or separate standards; these measures shall be discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved.*

2. *Adoption by State Parties of special measures, including those measures contained in the present Convention, aimed at protecting maternity shall not be considered discriminatory.*

Policies:

The Constitution stipulates that the state may make special provisions for women and children recognizing that they are the disadvantaged group of the society. The Fifth Five-year plan (1997 – 2002) devoted a separate chapter outlining goals and objectives for mainstreaming gender within the development process. The major thrust of the plan was on skill development for women to yield substantial increase in productivity of existing women labour force and open new windows of opportunities for future entrants into the labour force. This is to support the macro-objectives of the Fifth five year plan which are : reduction of poverty and development of human resources.

National Machinery:

Constituting sub WID focal points in all the implementing governmental agencies has further strengthened the WID Focal Points mechanism. The mechanism was set up in 1990 to provide a means for inter-ministerial coordination for ensuring appropriate reflection of gender mainstreaming concerns and issues in all projects and programs of the sectoral ministries. To

increase collaboration among strategic ministries for gender mainstreaming issues (ministries, which address the 12 critical areas of concerns identified in Beijing PFA) a WID focal points network headed by the Joint Secretary of the MWCA has been set up. In addition, a separate WID focal point committee has been set up in Planning Commission/Ministry of Planning to incorporate gender mainstreaming issues in the national planning processes. A National Council for Women's development (NCWD) was established in 1995. The Honourable Prime Minister chairs the council, which has 48 other members including 10 representatives of the civil society. It is the highest policy making body, which monitors and oversees women and children related activities in various sectors. The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MWCA) acts as its secretariat. To monitor the progress of the NAP and other WID related activities Women Development Implementation and Evaluation Committee has also been established in 1998 and the Minister of the MWCA heads this committee. District and Upazila WID Co-ordination Committees have been set up to ensure co-ordination between policy and implementation. The District and Upazila level officers and representatives from local civil society are members of this committee. The Deputy Commissioner and Upazilla Executive Officer chair respectively the District level and Upazilla level committees. There is also a Parliamentary Standing Committee for Women related issues headed by an Honourable Member of the Parliament.

Political Representation:

Reservation of 30 seats for women in the Parliament was introduced in 1979 and remained valid until 2001. At present, the government has set up a review committee to examine the possibility for reintroducing the system with increased numbers of reserved seats for women. Women also have representation in the various bodies of the local government.

Detail Discussion is in section 2.7

Decade of the Girl Child:

It is widely recognized that gender discriminations start at the early stage of life. To mitigate the problem the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) declared the 1990s as the Decade of the Girl Child. Each member country formulated a Decade Plan for the advancement of girls.

The Bangladesh decade plan known as *Samata* (Equality) had the following major goals:

1. Reduction of Infant Mortality to 50 per 1000 live births by the Year 2000 while eliminating gender disparity in the long run.
2. Reduction of under-5 mortality rate to 70 per 1000 live births by the year 2000 while eliminating gender disparity in rates. In 1996 the under five mortality rate was 73.68.

3. Reduction of Maternal Mortality rate to 3.5 per 1000 live births by the year 2000 while raising female age at marriage to 18, delaying first pregnancy to 20 and increasing CPR to 50 by the year 2000.
4. Reduction of severe and moderate malnutrition by half between 1990 and 2000. In 1995-96 the average per capita calorie intake was 2244.
5. Increasing and maintaining access to and availability of safe water for drinking and other purposes from 80 percent in 1990 to universal coverage by 1995.
6. Increasing access to sanitary latrines from 6 percent in 1990 to 35 percent in 1995 and 80 percent in 2000.
7. Increasing access to, and enrolment in, primary education to 95 percent by 2000. Increasing the primary school completion rate for girls to at least 65 percent by 2000. Efforts will be made to reach the global goal of 80 percent primary school completion rate by 2000.
8. Progressive and rapid increase in social support services and legal measures to be undertaken to prevent and protect girls from being exploited or abused. Special focus on children to be given in especially difficult circumstances. Accelerated efforts will be made to reduce and steadily eliminate child labour in accordance with the Colombo Resolution on Children (SAARC, 1992).

Source: Samata, Bangladesh Decade Action Plan for the SAARC Decade of the Girl Child [13] and Statistical Pocket Book, 1999, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

Public Sector Employment:

A quota system for women was introduced for increasing the number of women in public services, which is 10 percent for gazetted officers and 15 percent for other categories. To increase the enrolment of girl students the quota percentage for female primary teachers has been fixed to 60 percent of all vacant posts in government primary schools. However, this quota is yet to be fully realized. To encourage more women to join organized sector the government has established hostels for working women.

To reduce gender gap at the decision-making level there is also a presidential quota under which the President of Bangladesh can appoint female officers at the Deputy Secretary and Joint Secretary levels directly. Under this provision qualified women have been recruited as High Court judges, Ambassadors, Joint Secretaries and Deputy Secretaries etc. The actual number (as of April 17, 2002; source Ministry of Establishment) of High Court judge is 1, , Joint Secretary is 4, Deputy Secretary is 24, Deputy Commissioner is 1, Additional Deputy Commissioner is 5. In addition, women have been posted as the District Administrators and Police Superintendents, Commission of Taxes, Commission of Customs for the first time.

Special Programs:

There are various programs such as micro credit, collateral free soft loans up to Tk. 1o million and special savings certificate for women in nationalized banking sector for economic empowerment of

women. In health sector, programs for mother and child at district, upazila and union level have undertaken by the government to reduce maternal mortality rate. Some of those programs are health clinics for free immunizations of newborn babies and mother, women-friendly hospitals and day care centers for working mothers. Ashrayon project for homeless, allowance for distressed women including widow and abandoned wives, housing loan, and Employment Bank for unemployed youth are examples of special measures.

Major Obstacles towards Implementation

In public sector the reserved quota for female employees is still to be fully realized. The main reason as identified in a study commissioned by the MWCA is non-availability of qualified female candidates in case of primary teachers.

In private sector maternity leave and related benefits are not properly administered. This discourages women to join private sector.

At the national level the elected parliamentarians used to vote for and nominate women parliamentarians for the reserved seats. Absence of women representation in the Parliament may be viewed as an impediment towards women's active political participation.

NGO Initiatives:

NGOS have taken up a few commendable efforts, such as the Under-Privileged Children's Education Program (UCEP), which acts as complimentary and feeder systems to the formal education system. BRAC, Ahsania Mission have impressive, innovative non- formal educational programs for children. Apart from these, NGOs have also undertaken various programs in health, poverty alleviation and for addressing violence against women and children.

2.5 Article 5: Sex Roles and Stereotyping

State parties shall take all appropriate measures:

a) *To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women;*

b) *To ensure that family education includes a proper understanding of maternity as a social function and the recognition of the common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing and development of their children, it being understood that the interest of children is the primordial consideration in all cases.*

Stereotyped Gender Role:

Bangladesh is a gradually changing society where the position, status and roles of men and women have primarily been shaped by the stereotype of male predominance and authority over women. Men and women have been performing stereotyped gender roles prevalent in the society.

Interventions Made in this regard :

In recent years as part of commitment to achieve gender equality, the government has been working towards removing sex stereotyping. In different sectors, short term and long term actions/programs are there to remove sex stereotyping.

The National Policy for the Advancement of Women identified some of its major goals as:

- Reflecting gender perspectives in mass-media by projecting positive images of women;
- Establishing equality between men and women in administration, politics, education, culture, sports and other economic activities.
- National Policy for the Advancement of Women commits to ensure women's equal rights in decision-making concerning childbearing and family planning.
- National Action Plan has been formulated and adopted. It has recommended appropriate strategies and specific actions and identified relevant stakeholders for its implementation. NAP addresses sex roles and stereotyping issue and suggests specific time bound action to redress it. The NAP sets clear strategies and actions in this regard.

It also expresses commitment to impose ban on any discriminatory laws and prevent derogatory social customs affecting women.

National Policy has also emphasized the identity of child by both parents. It says "adopt measures to identify a child on the identity of the parents, i.e. to use the name of both father and mother in birth registration, in all certificates, in voter list, in forms, in applications for employment, passport etc". In this regard, executive order from the government was issued directing to use names of both parents in the identification of children. In this way recognition of mother in the identity of her child is ensured.

Steps have been taken to uphold the positive image of women in curricula, textbooks and in print and electronic media.

- Government has issued circular directing all concerned to stop humiliating, stereotyped portrayal, negative projection of women and violence against them.

- According to the law *Prevention Of Women and Children Repression Act, 2000*, identification of the victim in the newspapers has been forbidden.

- Committees have been working to incorporate gender perspectives in textbooks.

- Media has been sensitized towards projecting image of women and avoids stereotyping women's role. The MWCA initiated and completed a study, where it recommended prohibiting projection of women's negative image in electronic media like radio and television.

- Bangladesh radio and television have been broadcasting programs to redress the issue of projecting stereotyped roles and traditional image of women.

- Government officials, development workers, media and other relevant stakeholders receive gender training as part of advocacy for mainstreaming gender training.
- Government has created facilities and opportunities for women's entry in non-traditional jobs. Technical and vocational schools and institutes have been established for female students.

- Women are now recruited in police service and armed forces i.e. army, navy and air force for which they were not eligible earlier.

- Efforts to expand and improve support-services, e.g. child-care centre at work place.
- Maternity leave for working women is increased from 3 to 4 months.
- University of Dhaka has introduced a new department, Department of Women's Studies. .

NGO Initiative:

* Opportunities in the field of non- traditional employment are being created for women; e.g. security personnel, driving, entrepreneurship. Women are now encouraged and trained to ride motor bike and bicycles. They are trained to become bus drivers, paramedic etc.

* Several organizations introduced paternity leave.

* Gender equality and equity concepts are introduced in the education programmes of many NGO organizations.

* Gender training for sensitizing the society, entrepreneur development and leadership training are imparted in order to bring qualitative change in women's lives.

Challenges:

Maternity is still considered as an aspect of the reproductive role of women and not perceived as a social function. Such stereotype is reflected in electronic media, such as television and film and is sustained by the culture. The Government is gradually trying to sensitize media to change the prevailing perception about women's role.

In recent years increasing number of women are working outside home and contributing to family earning but household activities are not shared by men.

2.4 Article 6: *Suppression of Exploitation of Women*

State Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women

Nature and extent of the problem of Trafficking

Media reports reveal increasing trend of violence against women including trafficking of women and children. The situation may be explained by demand pull and supply push factors. Demand factor is primarily wage employment or bonded labour and prostitution whereas supply factors include poverty and social vulnerability. The gravity of the problem demands integrated and holistic action. The Government is aware and concerned at the increasing rate of violence and has adopted an integrated approach to fight the problem; this includes:

a) Ensuring holistic approach incorporating multidimensional factors,
b) Promoting multi-sectoral interventions,
c) Encouraging both preventive and curative measures,
d) Ensuring participation and contributions of all relevant quarters including NGOs and women organizations,
e) Facilitating the process of regional and transnational cooperation and other joint efforts undertaken to address the problem.

Media, both print and electronic are playing increasing role to sensitize people at all levels about trafficking of women and children. Bangladesh television broadcasts various messages on the issue. For example, TV slots have been provided with specific objectives of making people aware of the issue and action to be taken at community/local level. Attempts are made to strengthen border posts with army alert.
However, trafficking takes place by private connivance and involvement of regional gangs through network spread over whole of South Asia and even beyond. Government of Bangladesh and other South Asian countries are concerned at the trafficking of women and children.

In the context of regional dimension of the problem, the issue was brought at the SAARC Summit in Male, Maldives and Nepal. Expressing concern over the prevailing situation of trafficking of women and children, the Heads of State / Government pledged to take effective measures through coordinated efforts towards addressing the problem.

The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs prepared the draft for SAARC convention on "Combating the Crimes of Trafficking of Women and Children", and submitted it at the 12 th meeting of the Technical Committee. The SAARC Convention *on Prevention of Trafficking of Women and Children* was signed in Kathmandu, Nepal in January 2002.

Another important step taken is the implementation of the project for rehabilitation of the displaced sex workers. Both MWCA and Ministry of Social Welfare and some NGO's have set up rehabilitation centers for the displaced sex workers.

The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and Ministry of Social Welfare have taken up several activities to address the growing trend of trafficking of women and children. These include: preparation of a report on the status of child trafficking, setting up a data base, identification and formulation of appropriate strategies for awareness raising about the issue and dissemination of and integration of the issue in the education material/program. The government has involved NGOs at different levels for implementing these.

A pilot project, "Coordinated program to Combat Child Trafficking in Bangladesh" has been undertaken by the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs. The project, which aims at reducing child trafficking in Bangladesh, has following objectives:

- To develop an effective administrative set up and mechanism to address the child trafficking
- To activate multi sectoral institutional initiatives for different agencies
- To dispose effective legal protection and justice in child trafficking cases
- To rescue and rehabilitate trafficked children.

The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs has started implementation of another multi-sectoral pilot project, which has an activity "One Stop Crisis Centre" with following specific objectives:

- To improve quality of services and effectiveness of investigative, enforcement.
- To activate judicial, medico-legal, health, custodial, and other administrative agencies responsible for dealing with various aspects of crimes and violence against women.
- To provide women with better access to the criminal and legal justice systems of the country, with particular emphasis in case of access by poor women.
- To create general awareness of the issues of crimes and violence against women through public education campaigns.

The Government of Bangladesh has implemented another project called ILO-IPEC TICSA project for awareness campaign against trafficking at the bordering districts.

The National Plan of Action has been lauded against the sexual abuse and exploitation of children including trafficking.

Legal and Other Measures to Combat Violence:

Within the reporting period (1997- 2001) a new law entitled *Prevention of Women and Child Repression Act, 2000* has been enacted. It has been enacted to prevent and provide deterrent punishment for cruelty to women and children in the form of abuse, injury, or death using

corrosive, poisonous or combustive substances for any reason. It makes provisions for the punishment of kidnapping or abduction of women or children, a large majority of whom are forced to engage in prostitution or illegal cohabitation.

Special courts have been set up with Session Judges or Additional Session Judges in each district. It provides for completion of the investigation of each district. It provides for completion of the investigation of such offence within 60 days of the filing of the First information report (FIR). There is also the provision for completion of the trial within 90 days of filing of the case. The act contains a provision for refusing the accused any bail during the period of investigation.

Acid throwing on women has been a recent phenomenon.Generally, young women are targets of such evil act but increasingly wives are also being targeted for failing to meet up the demands of dowry. Combating this evil is a tremendous challenge for all concern. Recently the government has taken up a hundred –day program to combat acid throwing on and repression against women. Some of the important steps are: creating mass awareness against acid throwing and its evil effects; facilitating implementation of existing laws on this issue with speedy dispense of justice and finally assisting victims with legal and financial aids. The government has also decided to form special tribunals to ensure speedy disposal of acid throwing cases.

In 2002 the government has passed two bills i.e. Acid Crime Prevention Act 2002 and Acid Control Act 2002 restricting import and sale of acid in open markets and awarding death penalty for acid throwing offence.

These Acts propose death penalty as maximum punishment for death by acid attack. The Prime Minister herself took special notice and issued the directive prohibiting selling and buying of acid in the open market. This step has been taken to combat increasing acid attacks on women.

Important features of Acid Control Act 2002 and Acid Crime Prevention Act 2002

"Acid Control Act 2002 and Acid Crime Prevention Act 2002. Some important features of the laws are as follows:

- Establishment of National Acid Control Council Fund
- Establishment of Rehabilitation Centre
- Treatment for the Acid victims
- Provision of Legal Aid for the acid victims
- Locking up shops of acid sale and ban on transport engaged in carrying acid
- Cancellation of acid selling License for the time being
- Capital punishment of acid thrower and penalty up to Tk 1 lakh
- Judgment in special tribunals
- Judgment in the absence of the criminal
- Power of Magistrate to take record of witnesses anywhere.

In addition, the government has taken several other measures at all levels to assist women victims of different forms of oppressions, especially to victims of rape. These are: Creation of national and district levels women oppressions prevention cell, Special tribunal court at district level, Establishment of one-stop crisis centre for providing medical, legal and police assistance, Institutionalization of DNA test for rape victims, Running six shelter homes for oppressed women, Enactment of Special Act in 1998 for not publishing women victims picture in newspapers, Initiation of mass awareness program against oppression of women and children through national media, Making birth and marriage registration compulsory to prevent child marriage.

The Government has taken important initiative for birth registration with the help of "Union Parishads" members at the grassroots level. City Corporations and Imams of various mosques are also involved in the birth registration process.

The government has instituted DNA test to identify rapists through newly established "One-Stop crisis Center " at the medical college hospitals of Dhaka and Rajshahi.

The Government has also established a central cell at the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MWCA) and two other cells in its implementing agencies for taking actions against oppressors of women and providing legal services to assist oppressed women. The MWCA also runs six shelter homes and six legal aids centres in six divisional head quarters for oppressed women. These shelter homes not only provide refuge on a temporary basis but also impart skill development training to make them self reliant for social rehabilitation. In addition, the government has constituted special courts and legal aid centre in each district.

There are laws against violence. However, efforts and mechanisms for their implementation needs further strengthening. The Government and civil society are aware of the need and efforts are underway to strengthen the implementation process. Orientation and training to law enforcing agencies are being provided as part of such efforts. Law Reform Commission reviews and suggests new laws/ modification of laws depending on the situation.

Prevention of Women and Children Repression Act 2000 was passed to address the growing violence against women and children. Important features of the Act are: (i) sexual harassment and repression are identified as punishable crimes, (ii) prohibition on identification of the victims by publishing their photographs in the newspaper and (iii) death penalty for those, who will be found guilty of rape charge.

NGO Initiatives:

NGOs activities include awareness raising on trafficking, conscientization and training on laws related to trafficking, community mobilization through local government bodies, educational institutions, religious institutions and at the national level through the media. They also provide rehabilitation of the victims and legal counselling. A number of organizations provide health education particularly on HIV/AIDS and give service delivery to the victims.

There are a few projects for displaced sex workers. Sex workers especially the young ones have been rehabilitated in these centres.

Special projects have been undertaken for the education of the children of the sex workers.

Traffic Watch Bangladesh Northern Region is a network of 25 NGOs of the northern part of Bangladesh. It is committed to concerted efforts towards addressing the issue of trafficking. There is also a regional NGO core group with representatives from Nepal, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh.

Challenges:

In spite of all efforts at curbing, all forms of violence including trafficking are still growing. Actions need to be strengthened with collaborative efforts of the government and NGOs. Some of the basic issues are: traditional attitudes that contribute to the vulnerability and insecurity of women, involvement of regional and global networks in trafficking. Full implementation of relevant laws and inadequate judicial structure still poses a challenge to be overcome.

2.7 Article- 7: Elimination of Discrimination against Women in Political and Public Life:

State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination in the political and public life of the country and in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right:

a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies;
b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government;
c) To participate in non-government organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.

1. Right to Political Participation:

The Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees equal opportunities for women in politics and public life. Political participation of women is important as it enhances their participation at the national decision making level. Since 1991, both the Prime Minister and the leader of the Opposition in the parliament have been women. Bangladesh has enjoyed this unique distinction in top leadership for many years. Women as voters are gaining in visibility and gathering political strength. Women participation in parliamentary elections as voters in recent years has been remarkable. A discernable shift is found in the parliamentary elections of 1996 and 2001.

a. Women in parliament:

The National parliament of Bangladesh in the near past had 30 resaved seats for women who were elected by elected Parliament Members. Women, in addition, could contest for any of the 300 general seats in the parliament also. The provision for reserved women seats in Parliament expired in 2001. Both the present ruling party and the opposition made clear commitments in their election manifestos to increase women reserve seats in Parliament through direct election. The Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs is currently examining pros and cons of it.

Table 1: Number and Percentage of Women in Elections hold in 1996 and 2001.

Year of election	No. of women elected in the general seats	% of elected women in the general seats	***Number*** of women in reserved seats	% of women in the total seats in the parliament (300)
1996	7	2.3	30	12.3
2001	6	2.0	-	2.0*

** In 300-seat Parliament, men and women can freely contest for those seats. The Constitutional Provision for 30 reserve seats for women expired before the last general election in 2001. To strengthen women's effective participation in the Parliament, various options including increasing the numbers of reserve seats are presently under active consideration with the Government.*

b. Women in Local Government:

The government took several measures for empowering women politically. The most important among those was reserving three seats for women out of the total seats in each Union Parishad. This is a milestone initiating a silent revolution in the political history of Bangladesh as well as for the political empowerment of grassroots women. In 1997, the Union Parishad election provided examples for the whole world as half-a- million women voters took part. It showed that despite many problem women candidates can compete in the general seats and could win the position of the Chairperson defeating their male opponents. Around 12,828 women were elected as members in the 1997 local level elections. A total of 25 Chairpersons and 110 women were elected as members in the general seats.

The government has taken several steps to ensure an enabling environment for locally elected women, so that they can play a proactive role in the decision making process. **The major steps are**; a) increasing the number of Union Parishad Standing Committees from 7 to 12 for ensuring women members participation in the Standing Committees, b) expanding the number of Union Parishad Project Implementation Committee in order to provide women members as Chairperson in one-fourth of them, c) provision for nomination of three

Union Parishad women members to Upazila Development Coordination Committee and d) creation of social welfare committees at every female ward assigning the position of the chairperson to the women members. But in many Union Parishad, Standing Committees women members have not been assigned with specific responsibilities despite their inclusion in committees. In most cases women members are expected to be in the job of looking after education, family planning and health care. There are two distinct types of local government institutions now prevailing in Bangladesh – one for rural and another for the urban areas. The local government in the rural areas represents a four- tier system – a) Gram Parishad b) Union Parishad, c) Upzila Parishad and d) Zila Parishad. The urban local government institutions are a) Pourashavas (Municipalities), and b) City Corporations (Municipal Corporations). Three seats for each Union Parishad and municipalities are reserved for women who are directly elected by the voters.. The number of reserved seats for city corporations depends upon population in the respective areas.

Table 2: Provision for women's participation at Local Bodies.

Rural and Local Government Tiers	Reserved women Members
Union Parishad	4479x3=13.537
Zila Parishad	64x3 =192
Pourashava (Municipality)	183x3 =549
City Corporations (4) Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi	30+10+10+10 = 60

Challenges:

In spite of significant development, women's participation in political process face some major problems. These include lack of appropriate and adequate organizational arrangements within political parties for women's participation, low inclusion of women in the political parties and specially in the decision making hierarchies and lack of political training of women. However, the reservation of seats of women in the elected bodies should have a positive impact in ensuring some representation of women and enabling women to learn about the organization of different bodies and the political process as a whole.

C. Women in public Service

The goal of economic development of Bangladesh is to enhance the wellbeing and quality of life of the population through growth with justice for both men and women. Over the last two decades emphasis was laid on ensuring gender equality and mainstreaming gender through various policies and strategies to ensure participation of women.

Government has undertaken some special measures for women to ensure their participation in employment sector. A quota system was introduced with 10% to recruitment in gazetted posts

and 15% of recruitment to non-gazetted posts reserved for women. There is also a provision for reserving 60% of all vacancies for female teachers in the Primary School Teaching. In addition special initiative has recently been taken to appoint women in senior levels of administration i.e. in Deputy Secretary and Joint secretary posts.

The experience of the last two decades in Bangladesh shows that though female participation in the public sector is increasing gender inequality persists. The total number of females in all classes of public sector is only 10%. Class- wise female participation was higher in class III jobs (12%) and lowest in class IV (6%). Female participation was more or less same in class I and II jobs, which constituted 8% of the total strength of their respective groups. It can be seen that the female participation in the Department of Women Affairs and directorate was higher (12%).

Utilization of the job quota reserved for females in different years varied from 37% to 100%. For example, in 1997 –98 more than half of the BCS cadre service quota was filled, while the percentage of female job quota filled in 1995-96 was 99%. Only twice were the BCS exams able to fill 100% of the quota set aside for women.

Between 88% and 100% of the General Cadre (GC) quota reserved for women was filled by intakes from the13th (1991-1992) to19th (1997-1998) BCS examinations. On the other hand, utilization of the quota for the professional technical Cadre (PTC) varied from 26 to 99 percent over the same period. Many females have been employed outside the reserved female quota. Specifically, 56.93 percent of the female service holders in the general cadre were employed through the female quota, while nearly two thirds of the females in the professional technical Cadre were employed through merit and other quota (tribal, district, etc).

In 1999 there were 110, 201 male and 53, 245 female teachers at the primary school level which constituted about 33 per cent The information provided in table, given below indicates that with exception of 1997 percentage of primary school teachers female quota filled in ranged from 76% in 1998 to 80% in 1996.

Table 3: Utilization of Female Job Quota in Primary Teacher Recruitment

Year	No. of posts vacant	No. of posts available under female quota(60%)	Female appointed through quota	% of quota filled
1996	4258	2555	2036	79.69
1997	6663	6998	912	22.81
1998	10734	6440	4899	76.07
1999	21655	12933	7847	60.67

Source: Official Record of PMED

2.8 Article 8: Equal Opportunity for International Representation and Participation

State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure to women, on equal terms with men and without any discrimination, the opportunity to represent their Governments at the international levels and to participate in the work of international organizations.
There are no legal obstacles for women representing Government internationally. Government has taken some steps to increase women participation and international representation. These are; (i) inclusion of women in the diplomatic services, (ii) sending women in UN Peace mission, (iii) various delegations have also included women in international seminars and workshops. There are also a number of women serving in various international and UN organization abroad.

2.9 Article 9: Equal Rights with Regard to Nationality

1. *State Parties shall grant women equal rights with women to acquire, change or retain their nationality. They shall ensure in particular that neither marriage to an alien or change of nationality by the husband during marriage shall automatically change the nationality of the wife, render her stateless or force upon her the nationality of the husband.*
2. *State parties shall grant women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children.*

Nationality in Bangladesh is determined by birth. Women enjoy equal rights to their nationality, but not with respect to the nationality of their husbands/children. According to the *Citizenship Act of 1951*, a person can inherit citizenship only from the father but not from the mother. Also a woman's husband cannot be entitled to a naturalized citizenship through her. The spouse of a Bangladeshi man may receive citizenship but the contrary is not allowed.

Third meeting of the National Council for Women's Development, chaired by the Honourable Prime Minister, held in September 2002. One of the agenda of the meeting was Citizenship Act of 1951. Being concerned, the government is actively considering bringing necessary amendments to bring equal opportunities for both men and women.

2.10 Article 10: Equal Rights in the Field of Education

State parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education and in particular to ensure on a basis of equality of men and women.

a) The same conditions for career and vocational guidance for the achievement of diplomas in educational establishments of all categories in rural as well as in urban areas; this equality shall be ensured in pre-schools, general, professional and higher technical education, as well as in all types of vocational training;

b) Access to the same curricula; the same examinations; teaching staff with qualifications of the same standard and school premises and equipments of same quality;

c) *The elimination of any stereotyped roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education by encouraging co-education and other types of education which will help to achieve this aim and, in particular, by the revision of textbooks and school programmes and the adaptation of teaching methods;*
d) *The same opportunities of benefit from scholarships and other study grants;*
e) *The same opportunities for access to programmes of continuing education, including adult and functional literacy programmes, particularly those aimed at reducing, at the earliest possible time, any gap in education existing between men and women;*
f) *the reduction of female dropout rates and the organization of programmes for girls and women who have left school prematurely;*
g) *The same opportunities to participate actively in sports and physical education*
h) *Access to specific educational information to help ensure health and well-being of families, including information and advice on family planning.*

Education is a fundamental right of an individual. The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* says "Every one has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary fundamental stage. Elementary education shall be compulsory". The Government of Bangladesh through the Ministry of Education is making efforts to protect and promote the right to education despite monumental challenges. Foremost of these efforts is the implementation of effective measures for establishing a uniform, mass-oriented and universal system of education and extending free and compulsory education to all children. The Constitutional provision on education is attuned with the universal call for 'education for all'. The National Policy on Education (2000) declared that all children would be provided free and compulsory primary education. The policy has also given top priority to female education and the government is determined to have hundred percent literacy rates by the year 2005.

Statistics shows that the situation of women regarding education is improving gradually. Female literacy (Age 7+) rate rose from 31.4 in 1996 to 42.5 in 1998. Enrolment rate for girls at primary level reached 94.94, dropout rate of girls at primary level is decreased. The literacy rate (estimated) of male and female (15+ above) is 72% and 56% respectively. The government introduced Universal Primary Education to increase the rate of enrolment of children. The net enrolment rate of boys and girls at the primary level is 80 percent and 82.9 percent respectively. Gender parity has been achieved in enrolment of primary schools, the ratio of boys and girls is 51:49. Adult literacy rate (15 years and above) has gone up from 47.3 in 1996 to 51.3 in 1999

The enrolment rate of girls rose from 33.33 % in 1996 to 41.57 % in 1999 because of the innovative *Female Secondary School Assistance Project (FSSAP)* launched in 1993.

The specific objectives of the project are to: increase the enrolment of girls in grades 6-10 and assist them to pass School Secondary Certificate or equivalent examination, increase number of secondary education teachers in the project schools and raise the proportion of female teachers, promote a supportive community environment for girls education through widespread public awareness about the merits of female educational, social and economic development.

However, the dropout rate remains high at secondary levels. The present government is determined to reduce the gender gap in enrolment and decrease the dropout rates of girls. Education was free for girls up to class ten and a cabinet has recently decided to raise it up to class twelve.

The present Government has made girls' education up to grade 12 free of cost. In addition, cash stipend is given to all enrolled girl students.

The Government has made primary education for all eligible children of the country compulsory. To prevent dropouts at the primary level, each month the Government provide Tk. 100 cash incentive for each child and Tk. 125 for more than one child if they maintain more than 80 percent attendance. Annually, the Government spends Tk. 665 Crore only for this incentive program.

Table 4: **Dropout, repetition, Completion and Retention Rates in Junior Secondary and Secondary Level of General Education, 1999**

Indicator	General Education			
	Junior Secondary Total	Girls	Secondary Total	Girls
Dropout Rate	21.3	18.4	57.9	52.1
Repetition Rate	10.5	8.0	15.1	14.3
Completion Rate	81.6	78.7	47.9	42.1
Retention	86.1	84.5	89.1	88.1

Source : Bangladesh Basic Education Information Service 1999

Some other steps are as follows:

There is a national training council, which has well formulated National Training Strategy and National Training Policy. Government has put special emphasis on education and training objectives in Fifth five-year Plan.

The objectives of the Fifth Plan are;

- to make institutional arrangement for imparting technical and vocational education at the Upzila level;
- to enlarge and upgrade the base of general/science/ technical education at all levels of education and lay the foundation of a knowledge-based society so as to address development challenges more effectively;
- to ensure optimum use of existing educational facilities at all levels;

- to utilize the multi-sectoral potentials of education with respect to other objectives;
- to ensure participation of women in every sphere of education as well as to reduce the gap between facilities provided for male and female education;
- to improve management of educational institutions through involvement of local bodies;
- to improve physical and health education at primary and secondary levels;

The present Government is very keen to enhance the literacy rate of women, especially that of rural women. In this regard, concrete programmes along with increased budgetary allocation has been kept reserved for them which interalia would leave a positive impact towards increasing the literacy rate of rural women .
Details of some recent initiatives are in Part III.

2.11 Article 11: Equal Employment and Training Opportunities.

1. State parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights in particular;

a) The right to work as an inalienable right of all human beings;

b) The right to same employment opportunities, including the application of the same criteria for selection in matters of employment;

c) The right to free choice of profession and employment, the rights to promotion, and security and all benefits and conditions of service and the right to receive vocational training and retraining, including apprenticeships, advanced vocational training and recurrent training;

d) The right to equal remuneration, including benefits and to equal treatment in respect of work of equal value, as well as equality of treatment in the evaluation of the quality of work;

e) The right to social security, particularly in cases of retirement, unemployment, sickness, invalidity and old age and other incapacity to work, as well as right to paid leave;

f) The right to protection of health and safety in working conditions, including the safeguarding of the function of reproduction.

2. In order to prevent discrimination against women on grounds of marriage or maternity and to ensure their effective right to work, State Parties shall take appropriate measures:

a) To prohibit subject of imposition of sanctions, dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy or of maternity leave and discrimination in dismissals on the basis of marital status;

b) To introduce maternity leave with pay or with comparable social benefits without loss of formal employment, seniority or social allowances;

c) To encourage the provision of the necessary supporting social services to enable parents to combine family obligations with work responsibilities and participation in public life, in particular through protection the establishment and development of a network of child-care facilities;

d) To provide special protection to women during pregnancy in types of work proved to be harmful to them.

3. Protective legislation relating to matters covered in this Article shall be reviewed periodically in the light of scientific and technological knowledge and shall be revised, repealed or extended as necessary.

The Constitution recognizes employment generation and poverty alleviation as the fundamental responsibility of the State. Poverty alleviation was the major theme of the Fifth Five Year Plan. According to the traditional definition of labour force, women's productive work within the household is not included. Women are equally eligible for recruitment for public sector employment. Equal pay and benefits have been ensured for women in terms of pay, house rent, medical allowance, etc. The employment of qualified women to senior planning and decision making positions through contracts and lateral entry, and the increase in quota provisions to raise in the proportion of women at various levels. Opportunities for professional, technical and administrative positions through special training are inadequate. It is also necessary to encourage the private and public sectors to employ women in executive, managerial, sales and technical positions.

Maternity Leave and Daycare:

The Government has recently increased the maternity leave by a month amounting to four months to assist women in their reproductive and productive roles. At the same time, the Government has also started day care facilities at the office premises to help working parents with young children. Recently the Government has issued a directive that any organization having 10 or more working women must have a day care facility within its vicinity. The private sector industries are under constant pressure from the government and civil society to implement maternity leave provisions under the existing labour laws of the country. The Government has declared May 28 as the "Safe Motherhood Day".

2.12 Article 12: Equality of Access to Health Care

1. State Parties shall take appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care in order to ensure, on a basis of equality with men and women, access to health care services, including those related to family planning.
2. Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph 1 of this article, State Parties shall ensure to women appropriate services in connection with pregnancy, confinement and post-natal period, granting free services where necessary, as well as adequate nutrition during pregnancy and lactation.

Women get lesser share in the household distribution of food especially protein and services compared to men and boys. In terms of distribution of labour, women bear a major share of economic, reproductive and family responsibilities. Women often neglect their own health

because of unending demands on their time, energy and socialization pattern. Consequently, low nutritional status and ill health is common amongst most women in Bangladesh.

The Government of Bangladesh has declared National Health Policy, 2000, which is a pro – people policy with sharper focus on women, children and the poor. It is also committed to implement the recommendations of the Program of Action of the *International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) 1994* and its plus five review in 1999. Another important step is the formulation of National food and Nutrition Policy 1997.

The fundamental objective of the National Health Policy is to ensure health services for all in Bangladesh and to reduce the population growth rate. The goal and key objectives of the National Health Policy are based on some important factors such as: a) ensuring accessibility of poor and vulnerable groups to health services; b) increasing acceptability and quality of health care at all levels; c) improving maternal and child health care and d) strengthening physical facilities and human resources employed in health care delivery. The National Food and Nutrition Policy emphasized on food security at household levels particularly at poor households and raising awareness about food value and gender biases in food distribution at family levels.

National AIDS policy has been adopted. The Population policy is finalized. Reformulation of *Medical Code of Ethics* is in the process. Measures were taken to eliminate harmful and inappropriate medical and family planning interventions for women. Measures were also taken to respond to cases of violence against women. Two *One-Stop Crises Centres* are functioning in DMCH and RMCH. A 50 – bed Unit for burn – patients is operating in DMCH. Women friendly hospitals being introduced in 32 hospitals to improve the health services for women.

The Government has approved a *Health and Population Sectors program (HPSP)* in 1998. The goal of HPSP is to contribute to the improvement of the health and family welfare status of women, children and the poor. Many activities have been undertaken to increase women's access to, participation in and control over resources and services in the Health and Family welfare Sector to achieve gender equity. The Ministry of Health and family Welfare has developed *Gender Equity Strategy (GES)* to provide overall strategic direction to gender mainstreaming in the HPSP and to contribute to the poverty reduction goals of the government.

Health and Population programs of Bangladesh in the past made significant achievements especially in lowering fertility and improving child health status. The life expectancy at birth was 61 years for men and 60 years for women 1998 as compared to 58 years in 1995.

According to the Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (BDHS) 1999-2000, the child survival has increased considerably since 1980s. Infant MMR in Bangladesh declined from 100 deaths per 1000 live births during 1985-1989 to 66 deaths per 1000 live births during 1995-1999 periods, an average rate of decline of nearly 4 infant deaths per 1000 live births per year. Under-five mortality declined from 116 deaths per 1000 live births in 1992-1996 to 94 for the period 1995-1999. Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 1999-2000 showed that 60% of

the children 12-13 months are fully immunized. Although the level of coverage for BCG was 91% while 71% received all three doses of DPT, Polio and Measles.

Maternal Mortality is a serious issue in Bangladesh. Maternal mortality is three per 1,000 live birth. About 70% of mothers suffer from nutritional deficiency and anemia. Less than 40% of the population has access to basic health care, 50% of pregnant women do not receive antenatal care, 40% of them received ante natal care from trained medical providers (Bangladesh Maternal Medical Survey -2001). Over 90% of all deliveries still occur at home without assistance from skilled birth attendants. The percentage of trained birth attendant increased from 8% in1993 to 23.7 in 2000. The number of facilities having basic Emergency Obstetric Care (EOC) was 0.41per 5000.000 populations in 1994, which increased to 0.60 in 1999.

The total fertility rate has declined dramatically from 6.3 children per women in 1971-1975 to 3.3 in 1997-1999, a decline of 48% over a 25-year period. Although total fertility rate has declined, high fertility is persistent. Contraceptive prevalence rate has increased from 51.5per to 53.6per over time. Male use of contraception is extremely low.

The age of girls at first marriage has increased over time. However, the mean age of first marriage for women who were aged 20-24 in 2000 was 16.8 years. There is an evidence of raising age of first marriage of women.

However, the importance of women's health to the wellbeing of the family and society has been assigned high priority by the Government. Significant efforts are being made for promoting women's health and in generating employment opportunities for women in the health sector. Women occupy roughly 30% of total work force in the health sector, the majority being in front line and community based service delivery roles.

2.13 Article 13: Equal Rights with Regard to Economic and Social Benefits

1. State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in other areas of Economic and Social life in order to ensure, on a basis of men and women, the same rights, in particular

a. The right to family benefits
b. The right to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit
c. The right to participate in recreational activities, sports and all aspects of cultural life.

Rights to Family benefits

In 1997, Bangladesh withdrew reservation from the Article 13. (a) on the basis of recommendations of inter ministerial committee of CEDAW, headed by the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MWCA). The Constitution of Bangladesh supports equal rights of men and women to family benefits. Certain articles in the constitution provide equal rights and equality of opportunity--- " Women shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of the State and of public life", Article 28 (2) and "the State shall endeavour to ensure equality of opportunity to all citizens." Article 19(1).

In Bangladesh women enjoy same benefits like men in government services. In government service, same rules and regulations are applicable to women and men in entitlement of pensions and medical allowances. In case of housing allowance and government accommodation, both male and female government personnel have equal rights. Married women government servants are also entitled to their own housing allowance and such benefit are not withdrawn from them, even if their husbands receive housing allotments. The reverse is also true. In some cases women are positively discriminated. For example, while allocating government accommodation women applicants are accorded three years seniority in the waiting list.

In 1993, the then BNP government first enacted the law that for lifetime, widow would be entitled to three fourth part of pensions of deceased husbands who served the government. The government service rule stipulates that both husband and wife in government service should be posted in one place as far as possible in order to minimize disruption in family life and incurring financial losses. Recognizing women's practical gender needs, Government has recently increased paid maternity leave from three months to four months.

Challenges:

Although it is important to ensure equal family benefits for women and men through legal sanctions, existence of clear rules and regulations, the need for sensitization and dissemination of information relating these benefits are also crucial. The government has addressed this need and 'Foundation Training Programme' for the Cadre service personnel and other formal sources provide information on rules, regulations and benefits applicable to government service holders.

Rights to Bank Loans, Mortgages and Other Forms of Financial Credit

Credit plays a pivotal role in all development efforts. One of the important factors for empowering women is access to credit facilities and other economic resources. In Bangladesh, credit for women need to be analyzed in the context of its source, mechanism and nature. Grameen Bank, BRAC, ASA, PKSP and other non-government sources provide micro credit to poor women in the range of taka 1,000- 10,000. Bangladesh has earned international reputation where NGOs sponsored schemes targeted towards lending to women on preferential basis without collateral. Grameen Bank is playing a pioneering role in this field. Almost (about 2

million) of all the clients of the lending programme of Grameen Bank are women. A few other major non-government agencies have included 75,3001 poor women in their micro credit programmes until 1999. It is evident that with access to finance, poor and assetless women have made positive contributions to family education, nutrition and family income. It has facilitated the process of increasing their participation in decision-making process. The recovery rate of Grameen Bank loans is around 98%.

A number of public sector agencies are also providing support for the growth of industries, trade and businesses. Some of them are working for the promotion of enterprises and some have focused programme for women. The Government sector agencies are involved in promotional and regulatory activities for helping entrepreneurship among women. These types of activities include broad range of services like providing pre-investment and post-investment counseling, technical information, scouting, credit arrangement, infrastructure facilities, management and skills development training, market and diagnostic studies, product development, sub-contracting and co-ordination with other agencies. The public sector agencies which provide such services are; Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation, Women Entrepreunership Development Programme, Jatiyo Mohila Sangstha, Department of Women Affairs and also programms of other financial institutions.

During 1999-2000, Bangjadesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation has distributed a loan of Tk 211.19 million for 19760 cottage and Tk. 2,648.87 million for 940 small-scale enterprises. Women Entrepreunership Development Programm identified 38 various trade areas for lending. The ceiling of such loan is Tk. 60,000. The project however lacks many essential ingredients of comprehensive entrepreneurship development. The project is operating in forty upazilas and during the period 1982 to June 2000 it extended credit facilities to 95,158 women, disbursed an amount of Tk. 571.028 million, and recovered Tk. 522.11 million.

Jatiya Mohila Shangstha, one of the implementing agencies of the MWCA has initiated a project in all 64 districts of Bangladesh with the assistance of UNDP, has started entrepreneurship development programme for potential women. The project "*Entrepreneurship Development of Women*" was initiated in July 1998 for a period of five years with a target to support 7000 rural women. The project supports those who are graduates of micro-credit programmes of various agencies like Department of Women Affairs, Jatiya Mohila Shangstha, Department of Youth Development and other agencies. The credit limit is Tk. 30,000 – Tk.150, 000 though so far the highest limit of credit disbursed has been Tk. 70,000 only.

In addition, Bangladesh Rural Development Board, Department of Social Welfare, Department of Women Affairs, Department of Youth Development, Bureau of Manpower. Employment and Training offer various skills and management training facilities to their respective target group women and extend credit facilities to them.

Financial and Credit Institutions

The financial institutions and banks generally extend credit facilities to women under micro-credit oriented poverty reduction programmes. The interest rates vary depending on the cost of the fund. There are some funds given by Bangladesh Bank and certain designated banks for this

purpose and some organizations also uses donor funds. The Bangladesh Bank circular directs the commercial banks to lend at least 15 percent of their lending capital for the industrial sector. Recently Sonali bank, has initiated a project through its Dhanmondi ladies branch, titled '*Credit for Urban Women Micro Enterprise Development*', which offers loan to women between Tk. 50 thousand to 2 hundred thousand without collateral. Janata bank has also started lending for women entrepreneurs to a few of its branches in Dhaka city.

Credit to women has been viewed in the context of poverty alleviation programmes pursued by both Government and Non-government organizations. There is a growing awareness among Government and Non-government agencies that emerging needs should view women in a broader perspective involve them in large-scale investment by providing necessary credit. There is also a need to modify rules and regulations of financial institutions for creating better financial environment for women.

Challenges

Credit arrangements that exist for women entrepreneurship development in the country need to be more gender sensitive and financial institution should not only work as lending agency rather they can play counselling role to promote women entrepreneurs. During the period of trade liberalization, contribution of private banks towards women entrepreneurship development in the country needs to be strengthened. Reaching out to more female clients is also a big challenge.

Recreational Activities, Sports and Culture

The Article 15 (c) of the Constitution of Bangladesh mentions about the right of all citizens to reasonable rest, recreation and leisure. Creating an environment for increasing participation and development of latent talents of all groups of women and men by age, class and other criteria in sports and cultural activities is a challenging task. In addition to inadequate resources including infrastructural facilities and absence of effective mechanism, there are gender specific problems such as cultural barriers, religious orthodoxy, traditional views about women's potentials in culture and sports. Resource constraints specific to women in terms of financial, time, expected roles and responsibilities within and outside home are also important deterrents. Recognizing the multifaceted nature of problems, government has made specific policy commitments about ensuring women and girls' participation in sports and culture. The policy documents Fourth five-year Plan (1990-1995) and the Fifth five-year Plan (1997-2002) reflected government's commitments.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports and Culture has emphasized the need for creating specific infrastructure to provide scope and facilities for women and girls. Recent Annual Development Programme (ADP) 2000-2001 of this sector included specific infrastructure projects; Construction of a Women Sports Centre in Chittagong Divisional Quarter and Construction of a Women Sports Centre at Comilla District Quarter. In ADP 2000-2001, there are several projects targeted both to women and the men such as; Establishment of Regional Training centre of Bangladesh Krira Shikha Protisthan (BKSP i.e. Institute of Sports), organizing for sports competitions for 12-16 years age group of Boys and Girls from Union to National Level,

Establishment of Shooting Complex at Bangladesh Krira Shikha Protisthan etc. Women's participation in national, regional including South Asian Federation and international games has been largely promoted and increased compared to that of the last decade.

In cultural activities, though women play a prominent role as actresses, singers, dancers, writers etc. very few women are seen as producers, directors and in other non traditional professions. Women are gradually gaining prominence as directors in television, radio, theatre and other cultural media compared to film. Government is also promoting cultural heritage of tribal people in respect of their language, religious belief and cultural practices as it has been considered a fundamental right. Tribal women are also special target group in such promotional activities. Some noteworthy projects are; Tribal Cultural Academy, Establishment of Cox's Bazaar Cultural Centre including Rakhain Community, Establishment of Tribal Museum cum library, Construction of Tribal cultural Institute Complex, etc.

2.14 Article 14: Particular problems faced by Rural Women

1. State Parties shall take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which they play in the economic survival of their families, including their work in the non-monetized sectors of the economy and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure thee application of the provision of this Convention to Women in rural areas.

2.State parties shall take appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure on the basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development and, in particular, shall ensure to such women the right.

a)To participate in elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels;

b)To have access to adequate health care and family planning, social security, education and extension services; participation in self help groups and community activities; access to agriculture credit and other facilities and adequate living condition;

c)To benefit directly from social security programme;

d)To obtain all types of training and education, formal and non formal, including that relating to functional literacy, as well as interalia, the benefit of all community and extension services, in order to increase their proficiency;

e)To organize self help groups and co-operatives in order to obtain equal access to economic opportunities through employment or self employment;

f)To participate in all community activities;

g)To have access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities, appropriate technology and equal treatment inland and agrarian reform as well as in land resettlement schemes;

h)To enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communication.

The development objectives set in the Fifth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) for rural development, Co-operatives and Local Government sectors were formulated with poverty eradication as the main thrust. Moreover the government has approved Rural Development Policy, which has emphasized on poverty reduction, which includes women. The Rural Development Policy has a strategic component for reducing gender gap, which includes production and employment program, social mobilization and empowerment of poor, micro credit for rural financing and human resource development with special emphasis on women.

The development objectives set in the Fifth Five Year Plan include reduction of poverty in the rural areas; productive employment creation for the rural poor; development of rural infrastructure; self-employment creation for the rural poor and development of small and landless farmers. The main strategies for achievement of the above objectives set in the plan are; employment for distressed and destitute rural poor, providing infrastructure facilities for majority of the village dwellers, expansion of agricultural raw material production, formal and informal group formation and group development for co-operatives activities, resource mobilization through individual group savings, expansion of irrigation based agriculture. Most of these objectives and strategies are women friendly.

The poverty reduction performance improved during the nineties. The rate of reduction of rural poverty during the first half of the nineties was 0.9 percent per annum. Since the poor are not a homogenous group and they may be defined by social group, gender contexts etc., it is important to assess poverty reduction from different dimensions. Poor women, particularly female headed households in rural and urban areas belong to extreme poverty level. Various micro-credit, micro enterprise programmes of government and non-government levels have targeted this vulnerable group. The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs has been given the administrative charge of the Vulnerable Group Development Programme. The VGD is expected to be implemented at a cost of Tk. 598.00 million Tk. and 623, 370 million tons of wheat for a period of four years from 1996-2000. Under this Programme, 11 million women will have food security and facilities for training, health care and self-employment. Though Bangladesh sets an unique example of micro credit programme for poverty reduction, the challenges are to bring out poor women from poverty trap and increase women's participation in paid formal employment sector.

Participation of rural women in planning and implementation of development planning at all levels particularly at local level is gradually increasing through various programmes under GO and NGOs collaboration, micro financing institutions and through Union Parishad efforts.

Though locally elected women at Union Parishad play limited roles in identification of development projects, local level planning and social mobilization, it has already been recognized that they are the critical groups for ensuring effective implementation of local level planning. The Government has already formed various committees to expedite local level

development work and elected women members as chairpersons and general members in these committees. This ensures greater local level participation of women in leadership position.

There is already an increasing demand to ensure accessibility to adequate health care, family planning, social security, education and extension services; participation in self help groups and community activities; access to agriculture credit and other facilities with adequate living condition need to be expedited.

It is expected that Health and Population Sector Programme (HPSP) will play a major role in addressing the health needs of rural poor particularly women and children. HPSP is at the end of its first phase and 2nd phase will start from June 2003. It aims at improving the health and family welfare status of the general mass, particularly the poor, and the most vulnerable segment of women and children in Bangladesh.

The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and other GOB agencies have undertaken various programs to make rural women self-reliant. The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs is already implementing a good number of projects for economic empowerment of women through capacity development of women. Some of these noteworthy projects include Entrepreneurship development, Begum Rokeya Training Centre, OISCA etc. In Bangladesh, millions of women have benefited and become self-reliant because of micro credit programs, which in turn will contribute to the faster national development. Moreover the Abashan project has provided shelter to homeless people and women who given ownership of house jointly with their husbands. Till 2001, 26, 340 families have been rehabilitated under this program. During the same period, Tk. 864 million were spent as old age pensions for widow and abandoned women. Special funds are allocated to important safety net programs for destitute people including women beneficiary groups. A Support Fund for Destitute Women and Children amounting to 20 million taka and Destitute Welfare Fund amounting to 50 million taka have also targeted the vulnerable group. Although the sum is modest, it still is expected to start rolling helpful programmes, which in time may be expanded to cover a wider number of beneficiaries.

Table 5: Safety net program

In Crore Taka

Program	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01
Food for work	558.53	810.81	836.00	715.58	806.00	934.00
GR & TR	400.76	256.10	258.71	210.23	272.00	193.00
VGD	0	215.27	225.09	208.90	228.00	236.00
VGF	0	0	76.24	584.81	229.00	217.00
School Feeding	0	0	1.02	0	0	0
Others	1.74	15.24	0.51	65.88	1.00	0
Total	2860.03	3196.42	3296.57	3684.40	1535.00	3579.00
Growth	-12.65%	35.00%	7.72%	27.75%	-13.96%	2.86%
GDP	166324.0	180701.3	200176.6	219697.2	237085.6	258067.9
Total/GDP	0.58%	0.72%	0.70%	0.81%	0.65%	0.61%

Source: Economic Review 2001, P: 113

Table 6: Micro Credit Program of 3 Specialized Institutions

	Cumulative June 97	1997/98	1998/99	1999/2000	2000/01	Cumulative Dec. 2000
Grameen Bank						
No. of Branches			1137		1149	1160
Beneficiary			1481418		2357000	2378356
Female			1363805		2239150	2255699
Male			117613		117850	122657
PKSF						
Partner Organization			178		172	178
Beneficiary			1481418		1789063	219418
Female			1363805		1603978	1974978
Male			117613		185085	217440
BRDB						
Samity			33184			51003
Beneficiary			863288			1343666
Female			-			963342
Male			-			380324

Source: Economic Review 2001, P: 119

2.15 Article 15: Equality before the Law and in Civil Matters

1. *The State parties shall accord to women equality with men before the law;*
2. *State parties shall accord to women, in civil matters, a legal capacity identical to that of men and the same opportunities to exercise that capacity. In particular, they shall give women equal rights to conclude contracts and to administer property and shall treat them equality in all stages of procedure in courts and tribunals.*
3. *State Parties shall agree that all contracts and all other private instruments of nay kind with a legal effect which is directed at restricting the legal capacity of women shall be deemed null and void*
4. *State parties shall accord to men and women the same rights with regard to the law relating to the movement of persons and the freedom to choose their residence and domicile.*

This sections primarily deals with the status of women in civil laws and discussion under Article 16 has covered provisions of the personal and family laws.

Women are guaranteed equality with respect to men before the law except for those covered under the personal laws. *Contract Law1972* sanctions both women and men's rights to contracts, including those related to credit, real estate and other property as well as other commercial transactions, in their own names. Women are increasingly participating in the judiciary, through civil and family courts and they are entitled to represent clients before courts and tribunals. In 1999 in total 75 women were serving as District Judges, Additional District Judges, Sub Judges, Senior Assistant Judges and Assistant Judges and their number has been substantially increased in recent years. As per law, courts treat women equally with men in respect of litigation, seeking legal counsel or aid, rights to sue and assert testimonial right. (Source: Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs).

The Government has introduced *Legal Aid Fund* for poor people particularly women, through district administration but due to lack of awareness and information, at times the fund remains inaccessible and unutilized. NGOs also provide legal aid services to the poor.

The law also provides equality in relation to freedom of movement, choice of residence and domicile. In practice, women's domicile is determined by cultural norms and in most cases a woman resides with the father till her marriage and after marriage, she resides with her husband. When separated or divorced her domicile generally becomes that of her father or brother(s).

2.16 Article 16: Equality in Marriage and Family Law

1. State parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations and in particular shall ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women;

(a) the same right to enter into marriage;
(b) The same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent;
(c) The same rights and responsibilities during marriage and at its dissolution;
(d) The same rights and responsibilities as parents, irrespective of their marital status, in matters relating to their children; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount;
(e) The same rights to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information, education and means to enable them to exercise these rights.
(f) The same rights and responsibilities with regard to guardianship, wardship, trusteeship and adoption of children, or similar institutions where these concepts exist in national legislation; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount;
(g) The same personal rights as husband and wife, including the right to choose a family name, a profession and an occupation;
(h) The same rights for both spouse in respect of ownership, acquisition, management, administration, enjoyment and disposition of property, whether free of charge or for a valuable consideration.

(2) In Bangladesh child marriage is prohibited and the betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage and make the registration of marriages compulsory.

In Bangladesh, minimum age of marriage for girls and boys is 18 years and 21 years respectively.

Personal Laws at a glance

Dispensing equal opportunity to all citizens is a fundamental principle of the state policy. The Constitution of Bangladesh grants equal rights to women and men in all sphere of public life (Article 27, 28(1), 28(2), 28(3), 28(4), 29(1), 29(2) and 29(3)). Besides there are general legislative provisions aimed at achieving equality for women under law such as the *Family Law Ordinance of 1961, Family Courts Ordinance of 1965, Dowry Prohibition Act of 1980, Child Marriage Restraint to Women (Deterrent Punishment) Ordinance of 1983, The Muslim Family Laws (Amendment) Ordinance of 1982 and 1985, The Penal Code (Second Amendment) Ordinance of 1984, The Family Courts Ordinance of 1985* etc.

The Personal laws have been protected even during the British regime in India. Except a few Legislations, during that period, Muslims, Hindus, Christian, Buddhists, who formed the principal religious communities in the sub-continent were at liberty to accept and uphold Personal laws in the matter or divorce, dower maintenance, guardianship and custody of children. After Independence of India in 1947 the Personal Laws were recognized and the courts were following the trials under Personal Laws of men and women under religion and communities. Since independence, Bangladesh has adopted the previous *Laws under the Laws*

Continuation Order, 1972. The *Family Court Ordinance 1984* has, however, made certain changes in procedures regarding maintenance, divorce, dower, inheritance, and restitution of conjugal rights among the Muslims in Bangladesh.

Religious precepts influence issues like marriage, divorce, custody of children, inheritance of property etc. In case of Muslims, Personal Laws draw from Shariah. Hindu law governs the Hindu population. Significant provisions in Muslim Family Laws, particularly in case of polygamy, divorce etc. is already revised to protect women's interest. Such reforms also indicate that the interpretations of Shariah are not rigid and thus offer scope for fresh considerations for the well being of people and society. While the Government endorses the need for undertaking measures, it is well aware of the need to prepare the society for ensuring greater acceptance of measures taken for reformation of personal/religious laws.

The society faces the problem of less than satisfactory implementation of Personal laws. Particular references may be made to ***Marriage Registration Act, Dowry Prevention Act*** and law *related to polygamy*. It is well recognized that the problems related to increasing dowry, child marriage can not be handled only through legal enactments. Improving women's economic condition, educating women, raising mass awareness have multiple positive impacts, which will facilitate the process of eliminating dowry, polygamy and early marriages. The government is aware of this fact and has already made some notable progress in the field of women's economic and social empowerment. Different ministries including the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and broader civil society have been working on creating mass awareness against various problems particularly regarding dowry, polygamy and early marriage.

Regarding incompatibility between Personal laws and the Constitution, it may be noted that there have been many recent (personal law) cases, where the higher Judiciary gave verdicts on the basis of the Constitutional provisions and liberal and pragmatic interpretations of laws to protect women's rights and uphold gender equality. Such cases demonstrate that there is scope for restricted application of laws that are inconsistent with the Constitution. The Government is committed to remove such incompatibilities taking into due consideration to the long prevalent traditions in the society.

Optional Protocol

Bangladesh has ratified the *Optional Protocol* during UN Millennium session in september 2000. Bangladesh is one of the top ten countries to ratify which enabled the Protocol to enter into force. Thus, Bangladesh has demonstrated strong commitments for implementing CEDAW by ratifying the Optional Protocol. As CEDAW did not have equal mandatory status like other International Human Rights Conventions, with legal authority at the international level for investigating complaints of gross violation of human rights, introduction of the Optional Protocol provided CEDAW with a legal basis to investigate complaints, lodged by person/groups of countries that ratified the protocol.

The matter of withdrawing reservation from Article 2 and 16.1,© is under active consideraton of the Government.

Part III. Measures taken by the Government to implement the Beijing Platform for Actions in the critical areas of concern.

The Government of Bangladesh has started implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action immediately after the Fourth World Conference held in Beijing in 1995 by translating its commitment into a national plan of actions. In line with the commitments made during the conference, the government of Bangladesh developed a National Action Plan (NAP) in 1998 through a consultative process involving all stakeholders from the government and civil society. As a nodal agency for women development, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs served as catalyst to facilitate the process.

The twelve critical areas identified in the PFA are at the core of the NAP. Beijing Plus Five meeting has assessed the implementation status of Beijing PFA identifying new challenges.

The implementation status of NAP has been elaborated under Part II. This part mainly focuses on major initiatives taken particularly after Beijing Plus five meeting in June 2000 giving reference to previous policy and measures and some critical areas of PFA.

3.1 Women and Poverty

In recent budget (2002-03), fund allocated for destitute women have increased. So far, 43% of the budget has been allocated for poverty alleviation and a large number of beneficiaries are women. In this effort, Vulnerable Group Development Programme (VGD) is probably the largest development intervention that extensively targets vulnerable segments of women. Some 255,000 women, including female headed household VGD Women in 57 Upazila of seven districts received training in marketable income generating skills, nutrition and other relevant issues contributing to improved living. Presently the project is working with 85,824 VGD Cardholders in 57 Upazila of 7 districts. The female beneficiaries are selected by Union Parishad Committee from the economically vulnerable and socially most disadvantaged women who are, functionally landless. Having an extremely low and irregular household income, women belonging to critical childbearing age, lacking productive assets and preferably heading a household are eligible for such benefits. It is a multi-donor assisted nationwide Programme covering more than 500,000 hard core poor rural women in Bangladesh. The Programme is a model for successful partnership among government, bilateral and multilateral development partners particularly World Food Programme and NGOs. A large number of hard core poor women are able to earn their livelihood through self-employment through such program.

There are 32 poverty alleviation projects which are being implemented since 1991-2002 by DWA and JMS are involved in reducing poverty of women directly and indirectly. The total number of beneficiaries were 1303360, of which 320463, 587522 and 395375 women have been involved in credit, training (vocational) and credit & training programs respectively.

3.2 Women and Decision-Making

3.2 Political Empowerment of Women: Ensuring Participation at Grassroots Level
Power and decision-making are two vital areas of national life. The Constitution guarantees the right of women to participate in political and public life. However, in practice women's representation in political institutions at the national as well as in the policy and administrative decision-making spheres still needs to be increased..

3.2 Increase *in* the Number of Women in Decision-making

Women in Administration

1995	2002
10% quota for Gazette, 15% quota for non-gazette posts and 60% quota for women in primary teachers recruitment were reserved	Quota Continued
Women in Civil Service (Deputy Secretary and above) Secretary ---------- 01 Additional Secretary ----- 01 Joint Secretary ------- 03 Deputy Secretary ------ 06 ---------- Total 11	Women in Civil Service (Deputy Secretary and above) Secretary ---------- 01 Additional Secretary------ 00 Joint Secretary ---------- 04 Deputy Secretary --------- 24 ---------- Total 29 The Honorable President introduced special quota for recruiting women in senior positions.

Source: Computer Centre, Ministry of Establishment, May 2002

Women working in various administrative positions regularly receive training. A few women have been promoted to senior level government positions through lateral entry. Women participation in the executive body of different organizations has increased. So far, four women have been appointed as Joint Secretaries in various ministries through use of presidential quota. The present Government as an ongoing and continuous effort is pursuing advancement of women.

Considering women's participation in public service, it may be observed that only 80%of total quota provision have been fulfilled in the general cadre but in administration and technical cadres only 60% of total quota provision has been fulfilled. In engineering and agriculture cadres the women participation is insignificant. The Government has adopted a policy and pursuing its implementation to involve women in the army, navy and air force. Out of total

number of 61 High court judges, two are women. Besides there are several judges in district courts and Magistracy.

3.3 Education and Training of Women

Education is a fundamental right and a major indicator of human resource development. Present government has undertaken a noteworthy and mentionable step for increasing the rate of female education. Primary school stipend is being given to both poor girls and boys. The poor parents receive Tk. 100 per month for sending one child and Tk. 125 for two or more children. A provision has been introduced for stipend and free education for girls up to grade XII. This is to encourage parents to send their girl child to schools. Education sector receives the highest allocation from the national budget of the Government. The government has given special emphasis for imparting various skill developments and human resource development training for women. The rate of female teacher in government primary schools is 37% though 60% quota against vacant posts is reserved for women. In addition to this earlier policy in relation to relaxation of qualification for recruiting more female teachers is being followed. Minimum general qualification for female teachers is School Secondary Certificate (Grade X) while for male candidates it is Higher Secondary Certificate (Grade XII) plus Certificate in Education course or Bachelor's Degree.

There is also a provision for promoting teachers' training Programme for women both at primary and secondary level schoolmaster. Different ministries are imparting various skill development and human resource development training such as, vocational and technical skill training, training on livestock, fisheries and other agro-based activities to women. Training on cooperative management, social awareness raising training, formal and non-formal education, adult literacy training etc are also available for women.

3.4 Women and Health

Some of the noteworthy measures taken by the Government during recent periods are:

a) Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has adopted the *National Strategy for Maternal Health*, a comprehensive work plan to ensure safe motherhood for all women through out the country,

b)Under Health and Population Sector Programme (HPSP), Unified Behavior Change Communication (UBCC), a massive multi-dimensional campaign, with its gender responsive characteristics, is going on for effective implementation of the HPSP.

c) HPSP 2nd phase (2001-2003) incorporated gender aspects in the Programme at planning stage,

d) The government will start a Mid wifery training and provide support service to the Family Welfare Assistant/Family Welfare Volunteer to attain all child births under skilled birth attendant as a skill mix approach, and

e) Initiative taken to engender policy and research in relation to health under Gender and NGO Stakeholder Participation Unit of Ministry Of Health and Family Welfare.

3.5 Violence against Women

Violence against women is increasing despite efforts to curb those. *Women and Children Repression Prevention Act 2000*, was formulated by the Parliament to arrest the problem of violence. It provides capital punishment to offenders.

Some noteworthy measures undertaken by the government are: establishing (i) special cell for women in the police headquarters and four police stations, ii) Committee for the prevention of violence against women at the national, district and upazila levels, iii) violence prevention cell in DWA and JMS, iv) special courts with session Judges or additional session Judges at District level, v) providing training for the Law Enforcing Agencies, vi) legal aid for the victims of violence, vii) program for combating women and child trafficking, viii) establishment of a foundation for the acid survivors which seeks to provide the treatment and overall rehabilitation for acid survivors, ix) setting up shelter homes for abused and tortured women and strengthening awareness raising programs, and x) setting up of special tribunals for summary trial of sensitive cases and speedy disposal of acid throwing cases.

Other measures and laws enacted have been discussed in detail in Part II.

The Government has adopted a National Policy on Children in 1994. The Government has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Form of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention of the Rights of Children (CRC) and provisions of International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention (Prohibited forced or compulsory labour 1930, Abolition of Forced Labour 1957 and abolition of child labour under ILO.

3.6 Women and Armed Conflict

For Bangladesh, the issue of armed conflict is not significant; its position is principled rather than arising out of practice. In the global context, it believes that greater participation of women is required for effective resolution of conflicts.

3.7 Women and Economy

Women in Labour Force

Duration	Male Labour Force	Female Labour Force
1995-1996	3.05 crore	2.01crore
1999 -2000	3.75 crore	2.28 crore

Employment in Broad Economic Sector

Sector	1995-96	1999-2000
Agriculture	Male 54.4% Female 74.4%	Male 59.4% Female 67.8%
Non Agriculture	Male 45.6% Female 22.6%	Male 40.6% Female 32.2%

Source - Labour Force Survey 1995-96, 1999-2000

The Government since 1990s is undertaking steps to increase the participation of women in labour force. According to the labour force survey 1997, women participation has increased substantially. A large stream of female labour is directly contributing to the export oriented industries such as garment, tea and frozen fish. Moreover many initiatives have been taken since Beijing Conference both in Government and private sectors to enhance women's economic empowerment.

3.8 Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women

Some recent initiatives taken in this area are mentioned below.

3.8.1. The District Coordination Committee: Ensuring Bottom up Planning

Gender mainstreaming is a major issue, which needs coordinated efforts and commitments from the policy making level down to the implementation levels. The District WID Coordination Committee is a unique effort to ensure this. It creates an effective mechanism for bottom-up planning and implementation of policy recommendations at the local level. The aim of the committee is to ensure participation of various actors at the local level for implementing different activities related to women's development in accordance with the National Policy and the National Action Plan.

In December 1998, the Cabinet Division issued a directive to form WID Coordination Committees in all districts and upazillas. The Deputy Commissioner and the Upazila Nirbhai (Executive) Officer chair these committees at the district and the upazila level respectively, while the Women Affairs Officer acts as the member secretary. Besides this, a 22-members body including local government officials and opinion leaders has also been formed at the local level representatives for better coordination and implementation of the National Policy and the National Action Plan at district and local levels.

Box 1: Objectives of WID Coordination Committee

Terms of Reference of the Committee

- Distribute National Action Plan for Women Advancement at grassroots level declared by the Government and recommended for undertaking Project towards women development through identification of Women Development areas;
- Implement all objectives in National Action Plan of Women Advancement;
- Monitor and Evaluate programme/ projects/ activities related to women development undertaken by Government and other agencies at District and Thana levels

3.8.2 Strengthening of MWCA

A Policy Leadership and Advocacy Unit (PLAU) has been set up to strengthen the capacity of the MWCA as a nodal agency on women's issues. The main components of this unit are: strengthening capacity of MWCA; strengthening linkages with GOB machinery, specifically, WID Focal Points mechanism, communication and liaison with inter and intra-government agencies and establishing linkages with selected civil society and media.

Technical Assistance through Gender Facility Project of the Ministry is also there to strengthen the Ministry and provide all out support and assistance .

Revision of Allocation of Business of MWCA

The Allocation of Business (AOB) of MWCA has been revised to reflect the specific responsibilities as the national focal point and incorporate the expectation of broader civil society in relation to its roles as the lead ministry on women's advancement issues. The main focus of the AOB is to adopt development approach instead of welfare approach for addressing women's issues. The AOB also provides legitimacy to the MWCA to work jointly with the NGOs and broader civil society for mainstreaming women development.

For strengthening WID Focal Point mechanisms some noteworthy steps are; revision of TORs, revisions of reporting formats, formation of sub WID Focal Points at agency level, establishment of WID/Associate Focal Point Committee at the Ministry of Planning.

3.9 Human Rights of Women

Women and Children Repression Prevention Act 2000 was formulated to protect women and children from heinous crimes such as rape, dowry, grievous injury etc. The law makes provision for the punishment of sexual abuse and sexual harassment. The law also has put restrictions on the media so that the victims' privacy is protected. The introduction of the

concept of the safe custody is one of the most important features of the law. This act introduced capital punishment in cases of rape, and grievous injuries. The important features of the Act are:

- Speedy investigation and trial of cases will be held in tribunals and all crimes under the ambit of the law are non-bailable, with few exceptions
- A summary tribunal titled Women and Children Repression Tribunal would be formed for every district town to dispose of the related cases
- The tribunal will complete the trial process within 180 days
- The investigation should be completed within 60 days of the order by a magistrate or filing of the case
- Under a provision of the law, a rapist will pay for the upkeep of a child born as consequence of rape.

In September 2002, in third meeting of the National Council for Women's Development, a decision was made to bring certain amendment to stop misuse of the Act.

3.10 Women and Media

1995	2002
Government Commitment • More participation of women in mass-media • Freedom of Mass-media • Balanced presentation on women issues in national and international media.	• **More effective role of media for gender sensitization** • **133 minutes program on women issues in Radio** • **Separate page for women in national newspapers.** • **Modern Role of Women highlighted in the newspapers** • **Women involvement in electronic media, especially in reporting.**

In order to assess and identify the extent to which the media is gender sensitive, and are covering and portraying women's situation the Policy Leadership and Advocacy for Gender Equality (PLAGE) Project of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs has undertaken and completed two Research publications titled "Gender sensitivity of Bangladesh Press" and "Screening Television and Radio Programme from Gender perspective".

3.11 Women and the Environment

Women are affected directly and adversely both through man made and natural calamities such as floods, cyclones, droughts, arsenic contaminated water related problem, prriver erosion, salinities,

drying of wetlands, deforestation, using agrochemicals excretion of industrial waste, commercial shrimp cultivation, inappropriate land use, unplanned high rise buildings big dams and embankments. The Government has adopted *National Environment Management Plan (NEMAP)* and *Sustainable Environment Management Plan (SEMP)*, which has a strong focus on needs of women. Different projects undertaken by different ministries on environment social forestry sector considered women's relation with environment as key areas for intervention. The Ministry of Forest and Environment is implementing a project for Sundarban's Biodiversity Conservation, which includes role of women in plantation, seed production and progress on nursery and forestry conservation. The government is undertaking measures for providing safe drinking water for people faced with problems arising from high level of arsenic in drinking water. Women have been included in water management programs and waste disposal programs in municipal areas.

3.12 The Girl Child

GOB Commitment	Progress
Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against girl child Abolition of all negative culture towards girl child To stop violence against girl children To strengthen the role of family for improving the status of girl child To eliminate discrimination in health and nutrition for girl child	GOB has approved the National Plan of Action for Children (1997 - 2002) focusing on • Basic Education • Health and Nutrition • Water and Environmental Sanitation • Special Protection • Social Integration • Cultural Affairs • Information and Communication

Source: Bangladesh Country Paper. Presented in UN General Assembly on Beijing plus Five, June 2000.

The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs is currently implementing a pilot project called "Empowerment and Protection of Adolescent Girls" with assistance from the UNICEF. The project has demonstrated a considerable progress in empowering adolescent girls living in streets and red light area.

Part IV. Concluding Observations and comments: Response to the Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: Bangladesh (12/08/97).

The following is the progress report at a glance of the Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) made upon the Country's submission of Combined Third and Fourth Periodic Report on CEDAW, 1997.

Response to Recommendation 449: The Government of Bangladesh ratified CEDAW in the year 1984 initially with reservations on a few Articles. The government has already withdrawn reservations from Article 13(a) and 16.1(f). The government has already taken steps with an effort to address the remaining two reservations (Article 2 and 16.1c) and those are under active consideration of the government now.

Response to Recommendation 450: In order to ensure the substantial welfare of women through improvement of their health, the Government of Bangladesh has declared National Health Policy 2000 which is a pro-people policy with sharper focus on women, children and poor. The fundamental objective of the National Health Policy is to ensure health services for all in Bangladesh and to reduce the population growth rate. The government is implementing **Health and Population Sector Program (HPSP)** 1998-2003 the goal of which is to contribute to the improvement of the health and family welfare status of women, children and poor. Many activities have been undertaken to increase women's access to, participation in and control over resources and services in the Health and Family Welfare sector to achieve gender equity. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has developed Gender Equity Strategy to provide overall strategic direction to gender mainstreaming in the HPSP. Under HPSP, **Unified Behaviour Change Communication (UBCC),** a huge multi-dimensional campaign is going on for the effective implementation of HPSP, with its gender-responsive characteristic.

Gender Component has been incorporated in the training modules of different training programs of the medical professionals.

The Ministry of Health and Family welfare has adopted the National Strategy for Maternal Health, a Comprehensive work plan to ensure safe motherhood all over the country. The government has given top priority on the safe motherhood issue and declared May 28 as Safe Motherhood Day. By observing this day, the Government is trying to create awareness and responsibility building among the people, service providers as well as all concerned level.

Response to recommendation 451: The basic principles of the National Policy for Advancement of Women and the National Action Plan (NAP) to implement Beijing Platform for Action, which are the two guiding tools for all sectors have put much emphasis on implementation of the CEDAW and suggested specific measures. The National Policy has categorically committed to eradicate rape, prostitution, dowry and violence against women and also the physical, mental and sexual harassment of women at family and social level as well as at work place, provide legal assistance to oppressed

women, prevent trafficking of women and rehabilitate the distressed, promote awareness at national and international level against violation of women during armed conflict and war and take all possible steps to combat violence.

The National Action Plan for Women's Advancement has already been in the implementation stage, which emphasizes the strategy of mainstreaming women's development in all government policies and programs by all sectoral ministries and agencies. Besides the mainstreaming approach, the NAP also emphasizes to strengthen the existing violence cell of MOWCA.

There is a Central cell in the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs to co-ordinate the violence related cases with other related ministries and agencies. There are also similar cells in the Department of Women Affairs and Jatiyo Mohila Sangstha, the two implementing agencies of the Ministry to assist victims of violence.

In the Ministry of Home Affairs, there is also a central cell to monitor violence related crimes against women. In addition, two more cells are there: one in Criminal Investigation Department and another in Border Defense Regiment (BDR), which are working for speedy disposal of trafficking cases and taking actions against those criminal offenders.

The Inter-ministerial Committee on combating violence against women with the Honourable Minister of MWCA as chairperson, meets at regular interval to monitor the violence related cases, situation and also to discuss the priority steps to be taken in this regard. This Committee is also extended up to district and upazila level, under the MWCA to address the violence situation countrywide.

The law entitled **Prevention of Women and Children Repression Act, 2000"** is enacted to combat the crime of violence against women very sternly. The law provides stern punishment including death sentence, life imprisonment for the crime of rape, abduction, dowry and trafficking related violence.

To combat raging menace of acid attacks, particularly on women, the Government has recently enacted a tough law entitled **"Acid Control Act 2002"** to control production, import, sale and use of the deadly chemicals. Under the law, a National Council for controlling the production, import, sale and use of the deadly chemical is already working. The Government will provide rehabilitation center for acid-victims and assistance for their treatment.

"Acid Crimes Control Act 2002" has been enacted to address the acid related cases more sternly. The new law has the provision of tougher punishment including death sentence for splashing acid on people causing death and serious injury. More than one tribunal courts are underway for ensuring the speedy trial of the acid-violence related cases.

The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs has started implementation of a multi-sectoral pilot project violence against women. Under this project, "One Stop Crisis Center" has been established to provide legal, medical and other required assistance to oppressed women, especially those of victims of acid violence. Initially this centre is operational at present in Dhaka and Rajshahi Medical College Hospitals, which will gradually expand in other parts of the country.

The MWCA also implementing another project "Child Development Coordinated Project to Combat Child Trafficking" supported by thre NORAD. The main objective of this project is to carry out motivational activities and support the efforts of other organizations working in the areas of combating prostitution and rescuing, repatriating and rehabilitating the trafficked-out victims.

Response to Recommendation 452: The Ministry of Women ad Children Affairs has set up a Safe-Custody Home for women prisoners, who are under police custody as a victim of a crime but yet to be convicted as a criminal. The Government has undertaken this Safe-Custody Home, a commendable initiative to protect them from any sort of possible harassment in jail. Initially this home has been established on a pilot basis under a project of the Ministry, which would gradually be expanding, as a permanent set-up. The centre would also provide different kinds of vocational training for the prisoners in order to enable them to lead a decent life in future.

Response to Recommendation 453: The Government is well aware of the impacts of globalization on semi and unskilled women workers. After year 2004, the WTO will remove the quota system on ready made garments production, tax holiday, GSP etc., which might ultimately affect our labor intense industries where most of these women are working. Another impact of globalization is that free market economic policy has increased the volume of imports of global goods. Consequently, traditional and indigenous industries are on the threat of closing down as the produces of these cottage industries are comparatively more expensive than those of imported goods. These industries are usually family-based industries and most of the workers are women. Presently these women workers are at risk of losing their jobs, which ultimately will affect the economic well being of women and children. The numbers of female-headed households are also increasing as men are migrating to city areas in search of employment. The Government is negotiating with WTO to maintain the Multi Fiber Arrangement, which it currently enjoys.

The Government of Bangladesh is planning to take necessary steps for rehabilitating those women workers by creating access to micro credits supports and skill development training programmes for making them self-reliant. With new skill development training, they even can work overseas as migrant workers. The Asian Development Bank has expressed its willingness to support the Government in this endeavour.

Response to Recommendation 454: The Government has been working relentless towards sensitizing all tiers of the government functionaries with regard to make them gender friendly. At the same time, motivational programs are on to bring a change in the social outlook towards women. Gender issues and concerns are gradually being incorporated in the training curricula of all the government departments like administration, judiciary, police, medical professionals and others. On behalf of the Government, the Ministry of Women and Children affairs has been arranging workshops, seminars, dialogue with different professional groups like journalists, lawyers, media persons to make them gender sensitized. Various researches have been conducted to evaluate the programs of the news and mass media in terms of gender sensitivity. Timing for programmes on women issues in the mass media have been increased and shown regularly than before. Motivational programs with a view to enhancing social awareness in matters relating to women's human rights,

combating trafficking, violence including the domestic violence are broadcast on a more regular basis than before.

Response to Recommendation 455: While sensitizing the media towards gender sensitivity, portrayal of positive images of women has been encouraged. Prominent women personalities are often invited in different discussion programs to give their views on different social issues from gender perspective.

Response to Recommendation 456: with regard to improving the working condition of women workers in the export processing zones, pragmatic programmes such as housing for women workers and day care centers have been planned and are being implemented gradually which inter alia would yield positive results in the area.

Response to Recommendation 457: Ensuring the safety of the migrant women workers is not entirely in the hands of the Government as the country they are migrated to is also involved in the matter. Incidence of sexual harassment or exploitation of the migrant women workers, especially of the unskilled and not so educated labour force has been a point of concern for the Government. Therefore considering the risk involved in the process, there has been a embargo from the Government side with regard to migration of the women workers. However, the government is working in consultation with different national and international agencies and organizations to sort out the problem in a positive tone.

Response to Recommendation 458: Through the Local Government Ministry, the government has been taking different initiatives to ensure the systematic birth and marriage registration. Revised birth registration forms have been developed to register detailed and all required information. Initially the forms have been introduced in the city corporation areas. Eventually the entire country will be covered under the program. Along with government effort, people's active participation in this regard is necessary. The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs being the lead Ministry in the matters relating to women and children is playing the advocacy role. Information booklets explaining the procedure to be followed and the necessity for birth and marriage registration have been published and disseminated countrywide by the Ministry to create public awareness and seek their active co-operation in this regard. In order to make the machinery motivated to get the work done properly, Honourable Prime Minister has introduced award as an incentive for the best performing local machinery.

Response to Recommendation 459: In pursuance of combating all types of the violence and crimes against women including trafficking, the government has already strengthened the "Women and Child Repression Act 1995" by enacting another Law entitled **Prevention of Women and Children Repression Act, 2000"** providing stern punishment including death sentence, life imprisonment for the crime of rape, abduction, dowry and trafficking related violence.

The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs has undertaken a pilot project entitled "Coordinated program to Combat Child Trafficking in Bangladesh". Among others, the project aims at developing an effective administrative set-up and mechanism to address the trafficking issue, rescuing and

rehabilitating the victims of trafficking, providing effective legal protection and justice in trafficking related cases. Media, both print and electronic are used to sensitize people at all levels about trafficking of women and children. TV slots are regularly shown with specific objectives of making people aware of and action to be taken at community level. Attempts are made to alert the border post in this regard.

Response to Recommendation 460: The Government has already considered the development plans from gender perspective. In recent year, women are considered as a distinct target group by the national development plans. The comparative study of the five-year plans for different phases show that recent five-year plans have emphasized empowering women. The Fourth five-year plan (1990-1995) strategies included mainstreaming gender in the development approaches, the plan emphasized the development of poor and disadvantaged women. The Fifth five-year Plan has committed to reinforce the implementation of CEDAW, PFA, NAP etc. The upcoming Sixth five-year Plan has categorically incorporated eight micro chapters, which are Agriculture and Rural Development, Industry, Education, Energy, Health, Transport and Communication, Labour and Employment and Science and Technology.

The need to integrate gender issues into development planning is felt in all stages of the planning process. In response to this urgent need, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, as a lead agency for women's development has taken some major steps including development of **Gender Equality Planning Tools Handbook.** This handbook consisting of five gender analysis tools is designed to integrate gender concerns and needs into the design and implementation stages of all development projects. The five tools are (a) Gender Analysis Framework, (b) Eight Sector, Specific Gender Analysis Checklists, (c) Violence Against Women Prevention Guideline, (d) Guideline for the Integration of Gender Equality in Five Year Plans and (e) A Gender Analysis Tool for Policy Review. These tools will definitely assist planers to integrate gender equality issues in programs and projects of the Government of Bangladesh.

Response to Recommendation 461: The Government of Bangladesh recognizes that education is the most effective means of reducing gender disparity and furthering the empowerment of women. Various programs undertaken by the Government have produced positive results in female literacy rate. Student enrolment has gradually been going up following the introduction of compulsory primary education in the year 1990. The ratio of female student at primary level has also been increasing since then. The introduction of stipend for girls up to Grade ten in all 460 upazilas in the country since 1993 has been very helpful in terms of increasing girls' enrollment in the school and it has also reduced the dropout rate significantly. In the current year, the Government has made education free for girls up to Grade 12, which has been made effective since last January. The government has also arranged stipend for girl students at this level. All these will definitely result into enhancing the female literacy rate even further. Within the social sector, education sector receives the highest allocation in the national budget. Government is also implementing vocational training programs in schools at the district level to make women better skilled for the job-market. The Government is committed to extend highest possible assistance to eradicate illiteracy from the country with a special emphasis on girls' education.

Response to Recommendation 462: Studies and researches have come up with the suggestion that poverty is the root cause behind prostitution in most of the cases. Consequences of prostitution are healthy neither for women involved nor for the society as well. Women who are involved in this work are the worst victims, as this becomes a sort of social stigma for them because of different social, cultural and religious values of the respective countries.

On behalf of the Government of Bangladesh, the Ministry of Social Welfare has taken up a project "Capacity Building, Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Livelihood of the Socially Disadvantaged Women and their Children" for sex-worker women. Through this project, the government has tried to rehabilitate the sex-workers in a particular shelter home. Some of them have already gone back to their parents while some others entered the marital life with the help of the Government.

Response to Recommendation 463: Reservations of 30 seats for women in Parliament was introduced in 1979 and remained valid until 2001. The present government is considering the reintroduction of the reserved seats of women in the Parliament and the matter of increasing the number of reserved seats in the Parliament is under the active consideration of the Government.

A quota system for women was introduced for increasing the number of women in public service, which is 10 percent for gazetted officers and 15 percent for other categories. Quota percentage for female primary teachers has been 60 percent of all vacant posts in government primary schools. To reduce gender gap at decision making level, there is also presidential quota through which women are being directly appointed at the decision making level.

Response to Recommendation 464: In the light of these concluding remarks, it is evident that steps have taken to address different areas of concern like violence, health, and education. Civil societies and different women organizations are also working in these areas.

Part V. References

1. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), December 2000,Government of Bangladesh
2. World Bank, 2000. World Development Indicators
3. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), December 2001, Preliminary Report of Household Income and Expenditure Survey, 2001
4. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), August 2001, Population Census 2001, Preliminary Report
5. Bangladesh Labor Force Survey 1985, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS)
6. Bangladesh Labor Force Survey 1991, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS)
7. Bangladesh Labor Force Survey 1999-2000 (unpublished)
8. Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 1999-2000
9. Bangladesh Maternal Medical Survey, BBS, 2000
10. Narripokho, 2000
11. Women in Administration, Ministry of Establishment, 2002
12. Bangladesh Country Paper to UN General Assembly on Beijing Plus Five, June, 2000
13. Third And Forth Periodic Report in accordance with article 18 of the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, 1997
14. Bangladesh Household Survey, BBS, 2000
15. Bangladesh Country Paper. Presented in UN General Assembly on Beijing plus Five, June 2000.
16. Household Expenditure Survey (HES), BBS, 2000
17. Fourth five-year Plan (FFYP 1990-95), Government of Bangladesh
18. Fifth five-year Plan, Government of Bangladesh, 1997-2002
19. National Policy for Advancement of Women (NP), 1997 , Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Government of Bangladesh
20. National Action Plan (NAP), 1998, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Government of Bangladesh
21. Samata, Bangladesh Decade Action Plan for the SAARC Decade of the Girl Child [13] and Statistical Pocket Book, 1999, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
22. Official Record of Primary and Mass Education Division, Government of Bangladesh, 2002
23. National Education Policy 2000, Ministry of Education, Government of Bangladesh
24. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2000, Government of Bangladesh
25. National Health Policy, 2000, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Bangladesh
26. National food and Nutrition Policy 1997, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Bangladesh
27. Economic Review 2001
28. Computer Centre, Ministry of Establishment, Government of Bangladesh, May 2002
29. National Policy on Children, 1994, Government of Bangladesh
30. Bangladesh Basic Education Information Service 1999